# Harvard Israel Review

A Student Publication on Israeli History, Politics, and Culture

Issue 1 ~ Spring 2002

## Three Reflections on Zionism
Asher Biemann

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A STUDENT PUBLICATION ON ISRAELI HISTORY, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ISSUE 1 ~ SPRING 2002

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**Asher Biemann**

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Thanks to Keren Keshet, Harvard Hillel, and National Hillel, without whose generous contributions this publication could not exist.


Welcome to Harvard Israel Review, a student journal of original work on Israeli history, politics, and culture.

Anyone who has followed world politics recently will appreciate the timeliness and importance of this publication. At this writing, Israel is embroiled in its own war against terrorism, a war that has important implications for the United States and the world as a whole. But even beyond the current turmoil, the political and philosophical issues Israel is facing are worthy of careful examination by anyone interested in a vision of the world in the twenty-first century. Israel is a thriving democracy amidst authoritarian regimes, a model of religious and cultural pluralism, and a case study in the theological-political issue. To examine its past, present, and future is not simply to study a series of disturbing episodes. It is, more importantly, to encounter the birth of a modern state on historical land, the intersection of ancient tradition with liberal democracy, and the powerful ideas and heroic exertions that have shaped a people's existence.

In light of recent events in the Middle East, we have decided to focus this issue on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We understand, therefore, that the words on these pages will anger and perhaps alienate some of our readers. Others will feel they are long overdue. Whatever your own reaction, we urge you to read the articles that follow with care and to engage with them seriously. We invite responses to any of the ideas presented herein, and hope to devote many pages of our upcoming issues to lively, informed debate. Our own attempts to discuss these subjects in the past have too often run into relativism and intellectual complacency. We have been told that it is impossible to uncover objective facts about Israeli-Arab relations, because each side is hopelessly biased by its own narrative. We have been told that we can argue about history all we want, but that our words are irrelevant to the current situation. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that history offers an indispensable guide to the present, and we hope this publication will provide an alternative to such hollow assertions and the self-satisfaction they produce. Again, we hope you will approach what follows with a readiness to think and to learn, and we encourage you to speak up when you feel you have cause to disagree.

With best wishes and many thanks for reading,

Rachel Zabarkes, for the editors




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# Three Reflections on Zionism

asher biemann

## Return and Revolution

In the roughly 100 years of its existence, the meaning of "Zionism" has undergone a gradual transformation from a revolutionary Jewish struggle for self-liberation to a form of Jewish conservativism. Today, the "old" Zionism appears to many as an anachronism, while the "new" Zionism has so successfully rebelled against itself that it may seem to have left Zionism altogether to the past. And it is in the past, in the domain of history, that we hope to find any descriptive meaning the term "Zionism" might have, or might once have had.

Unfortunately, however, the historians and "Herren Professoren," as Theodor Herzl wrote in January 1900, always arrive after the fact and "explain to us what has happened" without truly understanding what is happening,[1] while those who themselves are in the midst of action are too absorbed to give a reliable account of what their actions are about. We do not know what Zionism really is, Herzl admitted, but we are "on the way," like on a train whose tracks have yet to be built.[2]

When in 1893, the Viennese writer and editor of the local Jewish journal *Self-Emancipation*, Nathan Birnbaum, introduced the term "Zionism" as a synonym for the "National-Jewish Party," he did so because it was not only "land" that he deemed the "secret of the solution of the Jewish question" but *the* land—Palestine, the land that is "most intimately interwoven with Jewish national traditions and hopes."[3]

Tradition and hope, one may say, became the ideological pivots of the Zionist movement and indeed the poles of its polarity. Without the intersection of past and future, continuity and interruption, interruption and restoration, Zionism could neither have stirred emotion nor satisfied logic. In "Zion" the voice of the Psalms and prayers resonated, a sweet melancholy and nostalgia. From the material rubble of Jerusalem a liturgical and, as it were, meta-material city had arisen, an idea in which the whole of Judaism, its memory and its destiny, seemed distilled. "Zionism," for Birnbaum, served as a descriptive and distinctively modern term for an essentially ancient phenomenon, for a Jewish mental condition that now, at the end of the nineteeenth century, had extended into the material world. By the time Birnbaum coined "Zionism," a variety of Jewish national organizations with different leanings and evocative names such as "Esra," "Lemaan Ziyon," "Hovevei Ziyon," "Ahavat Ziyon," or "Admat Israel," already existed in Europe and in the United States. Whether religious or secular, practical or theoretical, agricultural or cultural, the idea of Zion (*Zionsidee*), for Birnbaum, remained their inalienable essence. Zionism, then, appeared to be a uniquely unifying concept, and the National-Jewish Party promoted itself as a supra-denominational organization designated to unite the otherwise mutually exclusive religious factions of Judaism under the sole banner of "deed."[4] To Birnbaum, the success of Zionism would depend exactly on its sacred memory, yet also on its religious neutrality and the fact that in truth



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the National-Jewish Party was not a religious party at all but *Judaism itself* stripped down to its most abstract and yet also most concrete conceptional foundation: messianism.

In the logic of Jewish messianism, the course of history is conceived not as linear progress or circular repetition but as one whose future is dependent on the fulfillment of the past. From the view of sacred history, the past is only incomplete, the old kingdom rulerless and in disarray. But the past is not a thing of the past, and the kingdom has not vanished, not as long as the people still exists and are not at home in *Galuth* (exile). In Jewish messianism, exile assumes a purifying role, slowly forging an ideal people for the realization of an ideal past. "It is ever purging and tempering itself," wrote the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow of the Jewish national spirit, "in the furnace of suffering."[5] The paradox of Jewish messianism is that it yearns for the restoration of a past that has not yet passed; that what Gershom Scholem identified as the restorative and utopian tendencies of messianism are in truth one and the same; that, indeed, its meaning is to restore the future, to restore utopia.

Between topos and utopia, place and placelessness, fact and future, occurs the act of revolution, wrote the Jewish social philosopher and anarchist Gustav Landauer in 1907.[6] The revolutionary seeks to turn topos into utopia, seeks to redeem the present from having become what it is. Revolution means the ever turning. Yet, in turning topos into utopia the revolutionary also turns utopia into topos. Future must become fact. The true revolution, the true turning, takes place only *between* place and placelessness, in the pure space of time.

It is in the concept of revolution that messianism and Zionism meet. If in the messianic picture national restoration and national redemption are superimposed, then Zionism and messianism are vying for the same idea. If the Messiah was born on *Tisha be'Av*, the day the Jewish national center was turned into ashes and the people "redeemed" of its materiality, as tradition teaches, then the idea of Zionism was born on the same day. But if messianism means the revolution in time, the ever new restoration of placelessness, then Zionism became the revolution in space, the return to topos.

What appeared to be the only foundation of Jewish unity soon proved to be the ground of bitter strife. To be sure, in traditional Jewish liturgy and ritual the image of a return to Zion is so profuse and prominent that the term "Zionism" was destined to evoke a richness of associations and yearnings even among the remotest Jews. But nowhere in the same liturgy and ritual is the return to Zion understood as a self-performance of the people: God returns "in compassion" and "restores his Presence in Zion." God "gathers in the dispersed of his people" and returns our "captivity like springs in the desert." There is only one return the people may perform on its own—the "turning," or revolution. Hosea's call "*shuva Israel*"—"return, O Israel"—was a call not for settlement in Zion but for repentance in the unsettling days (14:2). Here, national rebirth is not conceived as an exodus from Exile but as a homecoming to God: "Those who sit in his shade shall be revived" (14:8).

From its earliest beginnings, then, Zionism bore its own antithesis. The continuous struggle in which Jewish Orthodoxy attacked Zionist activism was not the result of Zionism defying the traditional expressions of messianic hope, but precisely of Zionism *fulfilling* them. Thus, the secular historian Dubnow could mock political Zionism as "merely a renewed form of messianism,"[7] while a prominent leader of anti-Zionist neo-Orthodoxy, Isaac Breuer, went as far as to compare Theodor Herzl to the "King of the Jews" wandering around the globe—with a crown of thorns on his head.[8] Being fully aware, however, of the troubled history of false messiahs in Judaism, most Zionists did not grow tired of asserting that, as Smolenskin did in 1881, "we intend neither to attempt to force the arrival of the Messiah, nor to establish our Kingdom now."[9] For the most part, Zionism presented itself as neither messianic nor un-messianic, but as pre-messianic, pre-redemptive, or simply practical. Thus, to be true to its name and to "captivate and inspire the entire Jewish world with elementary power," as Birnbaum put it,[10] Zionism placed itself both inside *and* outside the messianic tradition. To avoid friction while still remaining inspirational, it had to become messianism without the



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Messiah, return without redemption, rebirth without resurrection; in its last analysis, Zionism without Zionism.

### Repair and Regeneration

What Zionism really sought to become was a form of repentance. When in 1897, shortly after the first Zionist Congress, Achad Haam, "one of the people," as Asher Ginsberg called himself, began to draw a sharp distinction between "Zionism" and his own movement "Hibbat Ziyon" (Love of Zion), he did so because, for him, Zionism in its modernist Western form had assumed the role of pop-culture redemption: "The wretched, hungry public is listening, becoming ecstatic, and hoping for salvation."[11] And it was Theodor Herzl's *Jewish State* of 1896 that presented itself as the instant gratification of their hope: "Today, everything is real," Herzl assured the skeptics in the conclusion of his manifesto. "The Jews who want their state, will achieve it."[12] What inevitably had to be perceived as the very utopian nature of his vision turned Herzl into a staunch anti-utopianist: "I am not inventing anything," he wrote in the preface to the *Jewish State*. "The material ingredients of the building that I am designing, exist in reality and can be grasped with both hands."[13] To Herzl and the political Zionists, Zion was a topos, temporarily out of order, but still reparable with the wrenches of skilled mechanics. The ultimate topian feature of Herzl's Zionism was the self-sufficiency of space which culminated in the Uganda proposal of 1903 as a "stop-over" for the plight of the Jews. "Palestine or Argentine?" Herzl pondered already in the *Jewish State*, concluding that "the Society will take what it gets."[14] Although he maintained that the "ultimate goal" would remain Zion, Herzl also believed that the immediate problem of the Jews could be resolved through territorial sovereignty alone. The eternally wandering, displaced Jew needs a "definitive homeland," he wrote in 1897, "soil and honor."[15] True, Uganda would only be the bread of the poor, Herzl defended himself in a famous speech of 1904, but it would still be bread.[16]

One might think that Herzl's practical territorialism was so far removed from the sphere of messianism that it was eschatologically immune. Yet, as we know from the strong reactions against the Uganda option by secular and religious Zionists alike (who then quickly called themselves *Zionei Ziyon* - "Zionists of Zion," so as not to be confused with the Zionists of Uganda) - quite the opposite was the case. Territorial Zionism was soon to be equated with territoriolatry, "worship of the soil," as Isaac Breuer nagged in 1925 on behalf of the Orthodox position.[17] For Breuer, the messianic nation was precisely the nation without soil, the displaced nation: "Not the soil is its source of strength and power; rather it lives on the air of Eden [paradise], in the sphere of messianism."[18] Exile was its "salvation," God is its "space." In worshipping the land, then, by placing topos before utopia, territorial Zionism had not left messianism behind (or ahead) but created its own, false messianism. The "national home," Breuer wrote, fell nothing short of the "destruction of the Jewish people."[19]

The eternally wandering, displaced Jew needs a "definitive homeland," Herzl wrote, "soil and honor."

The Orthodox rejection of territorial Zionism as topian messianism was shared by the so-called "cultural" and "spiritual" Zionists, who, for the most part, were disciples of Achad Haam. In contrast to the Zionists, the members of "Hibbat Ziyon" put the emphasis of national liberation on the liberation of "spirit" and the revivication of "culture." To them, the Zionism of the "rumbling stomachs," as Achad Haam wrote in his first critical essay of 1889,[20] had become a mere "appendage" to the fantastic religious notion of "resurrection of the dead," whereas "Hibbat Ziyon" aimed for the "resurrection of the hearts," a spiritual regeneration: "[T]he heart of the people is the foundation



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on which to build the land," wrote Achad Haam acknowledging, however, that the people was currently in a "shattered and rotten" state.[21] In placing the body before the heart (and the heart, in Jewish traditon, is the seat also of the mind), Zionism put the end before the beginning, thereby putting an end *to* the beginning. From the standpoint of external exile, the physical pressure of poverty and anti-Semitism, territorial sovereignty was indeed an end in itself. Within the boundaries of topos, the historical rupture that exile represented could be repaired. But outside the boundaries, in the sphere of pure time, exile would continue. For in utopian, that is, messianic history, external repairs are of no avail: The true exile of exiles is the exile "within."

What, then, gave Zionism the confidence to repair the exile without? Achad Haam responded: the Enlightenment. For it was precisely the Enlightenment that had created the possibility of the external Jew, the "Jew outside," the Jew who, for the first time, experienced the world as an extension in space. But in extending himself into the external, the "Jew outside" had to leave the "Jew inside" behind. Free as "man," the "'Jew inside' remained what he always was: a slave with all the attributes of slavery that he had acquired in the course of exile."[22] Zionism only came to turn the inward outward; but it could not redeem it from slavery.

Neither could Hibbat Ziyon. By its very conception, Hibbat Ziyon was regenerative rather than redemptive. The "resurrection of hearts" could not be done on behalf of the people, in one revolutionary swoop, but only as an evolutionary process in each individual. "Know yourself!" was the principle command of Love of Zion,[23] and the Socratic secret of midwifery applied to the recovery of this love as well. "Without teaching and admonition," Achad Haam envisioned a "regeneration of Judaism"[24] that would precede and supersede the restoration of Jewish territory. The true "lover" of Zion, like the true lover of wisdom, desires but does not possess. Possession is the hubris of the Zionists, just as it was the hubris of the Sophists. Yet, just as the philosopher must believe in the possibility of truth, so the lover of Zion must believe in the possibility of Zion.

Achad Haam's self-denying Zionism set out to awaken desire and make the heart/mind aware of its "inner Judaism." Like the first philosophers, "Israel begins to marvel at itself."[25] And as it recovers its own memory—not unlike the Platonic *anamnesis* (re-remembrance)—it begins to regenerate itself, to be reborn from within. This is the meaning of "Hibbat Ziyon": regeneration (*thiya*) of memory, regeneration of the generations (*toldot*), the repair of Israel's spiritual history, for it was the "spirit" (*ruah*) of Judaism, not its physis, that "spiritual" and "cultural" Zionists as well as anti-Zionists and a-Zionists such as the historian Simon Dubnow, considered "immortal" and "eternal." By its own definition, the regeneration of the "spirit" could not happen in a bypath of Judaism, let alone outside of it. Hence, Achad Haam did not hesitate to describe Hibbat Ziyon "as neither a part of Judaism nor an addition to it but Judaism itself in its entire totality."[26]

With this expansion of Zionism, the Achad Haam school sought indeed to create a more inclusive version of Jewish nationalism. Such a prospect of inclusivity led even the author of the term "Zionism," Nathan Birnbaum, to effectively abandon his brainchild in 1902 and replace it with "Jewish Renaissance," only a year after it had been introduced by his Viennese colleague Martin Buber. In light of the new movement, Birnbaum wrote, "the term 'Zionism' has become too weak and too narrow."[27] Soon the term "greater Zionism" appeared alongside many other terminological revisionisms as a form of "purified," "enlightened," and more inclusive Zionism, which the Prague philosopher Hugo Bergmann simply called "Judaism on its way to self-liberation."[28] As late as 1958, it should be noted, Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Jewish Reconstructionism in America, still used the term "greater Zionism" in an address at the convention of American Zionists.[29]

But here, too, the inclusiveness turned into exclusivity. Unable to define the "spirit" of Judaism that ought to be revived, the "greater" Zionists turned to Jewish "culture" whose meaning was even more elusive and even more at odds with the traditional camp. When Birnbaum wrote about the "great renaissance movement" as the "genesis of a culture" (with culture



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as both subject and object) and the "process of seeking and finding oneself,"[30] he was fully conscious of its elusiveness and indefinability. But this was precisely the point of spiritual and cultural Zionism: that its program did not consist of finding land but of discovering oneself. That national redemption would begin not with the inspection of territory in Palestine, Argentine, Uganda, or elsewhere, but with the process of introspection in exile. "Galuth is no less than indespensable for the Jewish Renaissance," Birnbaum wrote in 1903.[31] Negating exile would therefore amount to the negation of redemption. What Herzl failed to do, Achad Haam wrote shortly after the third Zionist Congress in 1899, was to realize that the source of redemption was not to be found in the "great leaders of the land" but in the "turning of the hearts of the people."[32] And "turning," in Judaism, means repentance.

### Illusion and Realization

Ultimately, neither "cultural" Zionism modeled after Hibbat Zion, nor religious Zionism— having realized, like Breuer or Rav Kook, that if secular Zionists could not be turned into *baalei teshuva* (penitents), they at least could be turned into unwitting agents of a higher plan of salvation—rejected the program of territorialism entirely. "The Judaism of Eretz Israel (the land of Israel) is the very redemption," wrote Abraham Isaak Kook, who, in 1921, became the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine.[33] To be sure, Kook did not subscribe to the extreme topianism of the early Herzl, but he did embrace a form of physical Zionism that was not far removed from Max Nordau's famous call on the Jews in 1900 to become "muscular" again.[34] Along with the spiritual return, Rav Kook argued, a "physical return" would be necessary "which will create healthy flesh and blood, strong and well formed bodies, and a fiery spirit encased in powerful muscles."[35] Where Achad Haam had carefully put the "resurrection of the hearts," Kook bluntly invoked the image of a "physical resurrection of the dead," for "[w]e have neglected health and physical prowess, forgetting that our flesh is as sacred as our spirit."[36] Even Isaac Breuer, in his 1921 "Frankfurt manifesto" of Agudat Israel (the anti-Zionist Orthodox unity party), recommended "gymnastic exercise," if also with a degree of "moderation": "Only a healthy body can endure the hard demands of Agudism."[37] Breuer's quite creative model of "*Torah-im-derekh-eretz-Israel*" (literally, Torah combined with the way of the land of Israel) represented a remarkable revision of his grandfather's "*galuth*ist" confession of "*Torah-im-derekh-eretz*," usually understood as Torah combined with secular studies, as it still prevailed among most neo-Orthodox Jews in imperial Germany. Not "land and soil" but the "common task of the Torah" establish the bond of Israel, wrote Samson Raphael Hirsch in 1836.[38] While Breuer, in theory, repeated this credo in 1925, as we have seen earlier, he also introduced a new parlance of Torah: The "law" of the Torah and the "soil" of the Torah.[39] Only in the land of Israel could law and soil be truly combined. And therefore, Breuer argued, they *must* be combined.

Similarly, Achad Haam, though far from advocating a theocracy, recognized that Jewish "spirit" and Jewish "culture" would need a "center" if they should serve as a truly unifying force. The utopian spirit, eternally soaring over the limitlessness of diaspora and time, still was in need of a topian home, a place to stay and to be. Echoing the proclamation of the first Zionist Congress, Achad Haam defined the goal of Hibbat Ziyon as the "creation of a homeland for our spirit,"[40] a "secure and autonomous center for our national culture,"[41] toward which all spiritual energy could "gravitate."[42] The idea of space was not absent even in the loftiest of all cultural and spiritual Zionists. In his 1916 essay "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," Martin Buber, though reiterating the "purifying" role of exile for the indestructible "primal force" of Judaism, contended that this "force" could become creative again only in the "motherly soil," through its "re-rooting in the native land," by "the verification of life in the narrowness of Canaan."[43]

It was the very openness of cultural and spiritual Zionism, and the Jewish Renaissance movement at large, that required constraints, a notion of space, the localization of a center, a direction to turn to for the cultural penitents in exile. To be sure, the Jews of



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Vienna, Berlin, and Prague could produce culture without limits, and were supposed to do so as an act of turning; but only the Jews of Zion would produce "true" culture and "true" spirit, untainted by the idols of the Occident. The "authentic" Jew in exile was all but an illusion, for Buber even "destructive."[44] The Judaism of exile, he called "fictitious."[45]

THE MATTER FOR EACH CAMP of Zionism was sufficiently clear: just as an increasing multiplicity of Jewish religious branches was engaged in a battle over "true" Judaism, the new variety of Zionists vied for "true" Zionism. "True *Yehudim*," Jacob Rosenheim wrote on behalf of Jewish Orthodoxy in 1906, using the "authentic" Hebrew word for "Jews," "were Zionists long before Zionism even came into being."[46] In the rhetoric of truth and illusion, authenticity and fictitiousness, the forms of practical-territorial Zionism emerged as the ultimate illusion. Biting criticism descended upon Herzl's literary escapade of 1902, *Old-New-Land*. The Orthodox journal *Der Israelit* treated it as a mere "product of fantasy" that the author Herzl had begun to take for reality.[47] No less biting was Achad Haam's review of Herzl's futuristic novel, noting that "in *Old-New-Land* nothing can surprise us, for everything is one big miracle."[48] The minute imagination of facts, Achad Haam continued, illustrates how the "'messianic age' that is at our door reflects itself in the head of the Zionist leader."[49] For Rosenheim, the hallucination of facticity was the essential symptom of "Zionist hypnosis."[50] In contrast to political fairy-tales, the "renaissance of traditional Jewish spirit and its outward forms is possible at all times," Rosenheim insisted, adding Herzl's own, now proverbial words: "If you wish it, it is not a dream."[51] According to Breuer, the great illusion of all Zionists was their conviction that they were agents in the "actual" world and "real" history, in the realm of Kant's "*an-sich*," while in truth, they were mere shadows in the phenomenal world. "Torah true" Zionism, on the other hand, and spiritual-cultural Zionism, both of which considered themselves nothing less than identical with "true Judaism," could claim "truth," for they had not attached themselves to the factual world, to material topos. Rather, the physical space, to them, was both there and not there, a place yet to be realized as a space of Torah, "spirit," or "culture." In practice, the utopian sphere, the "meta-historical" truth, was the only topos these Zionists could hope to claim. Quite naturally, their parallel conquest of utopia set religious and spiritual/cultural Zionists apart with mutual hostility much fiercer than any political most dramatic transformation of Judaism in the modern period: the Judaism of time has become a Judaism of space. It can no longer deny the power of topos, for it can no longer rely on the power of time. Time is a venture without refuge. In time we could call ourselves the masters of utopia, but not more than that. In space we are the agents of actuality, but we are also limits to others. Where I am, says the voice of topos, there you are not. And the voice of utopia, what does it say? It remains silent in the limitlessness of time.



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*Notes*

1. Theodor Herzl, "Underway," in *Collected Zionist Works*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Hozaah Ivrith, 1934), p. 387.
2. Ibid., p. 388.
3. Nathan Birnbaum, *The National Rebirth of the Jewish People in their Land, as a Means of Solving the Jewish Question. An Appeal to the Good and Noble of All Nations* (Vienna: Selfpublished, 1893), p. 13.
4. Ibid., p. 43.
5. Simon Dubnow, "Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History," in *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, K. S. Pinson, ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society), p. 321.
6. Gustav Landauer, *The Revolution,* in *Society: A Collection of Sociopsychological Mongraphs*, Martin Buber, ed. (Frankfurt/M.: Rütten and Loening, 1907), p. 13.
7. Dubnow, "Letters on Old and New Judaism," in *Nationalism and History,* p. 157.
8. Isaac Breuer, *Jewish Problem* (Halle/Saale: Hendel Verlag, 1918), p. 51.
9. Peretz Smolenskin, "Let Us Search For Our Ways," reprinted in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), p. 152.
10. Birnbaum, *The National Rebirth*, p. 13.
11. Achad Haam, "The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem," in *The Zionist Idea,* p. 262.
12. Herzl, "The Jewish State," in *Collected Zionist Works*, vol. 1, p. 103, p. 104.
13. Ibid., p. 19.
14. Ibid., p. 45.
15. Herzl, "The Eternal Jew," in *Collected Zionist Works*, vol. 1, p. 233, p. 234.
16. Herzl, "Palestine or Uganda?" in *Collected Zionist Works*, vol. 1, p. 501. The image was used already by Smolenskin in 1881: "We seek only to provide bread, in a land in which there is hope that those who labour on it will find rest." See Peretz Smolenskin, "Let us search our Ways," p. 152.
17. Isaac Breuer, *The Jewish National Home* (Frankfurt/M.: Kauffmann Verlag, 1925), p. 41.
18. Breuer, *Messiah's Tracks* (Frankfurt/M.: Rudolf Hammon, 1918), p. 27.
19. Breuer, *The Jewish National Home*, p. 42.
20. Achad Haam, "This is Not the Way," in *Standing at the Crossroads*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1913), p. 42.
21. Ibid., p. 41, p. 42.
22. Achad Haam, "The Man Within," in *Standing at the Crossroads*, vol. 1, p. 91.
23. Achad Haam, "Wounds from a Friendly Hand," in *Standing at the Crossroads*, vol. 1, p. 59.
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35. Abraham Isaac Kook: "Lights of Rebirth," in *The Zionist Idea*, p. 431.
36. Ibid.
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38. Samson Raphael Hirsch (Ben Uziel), *Nineteen Letters*, transl. Bernard Drachman (New York: 1899), p. 161.
39. Breuer, *The Jewish National Home*, p. 106.
40. Achad Haam, "The Time is Come," in *Standing at the Crossroads*, vol. 2, p. 197.
41. Achad Haam, "The Revival of the Mind," in *Standing*



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42. Achad Haam, "Rejection of Galuth," in *Standing at the Crossroads*, vol. 2, p. 226.
43. Martin Buber, "The Mind of the Orient and Judaism," in *The Jew and His Judaism: Collected Essays and Speeches* (Gerlingen: Lambert Schneider, 1993), p. 54.
44. Buber, "Judaism and Humanism," in *The Jew and His Judaism*, p. 25.
45. Buber, "People, Nation, Zion: First Impressions and Reality" (Letter to Hermann Cohen), *The Jew and His Judaism*, p. 284.
46. Jacob Rosenheim, "Zionist 'Religiosity'," in Rosenheim, *Ohalei Yaakov: Collected Essays and Speeches*, vol. II (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1930), p. 89.
47. Siegmund Schott, "A Zionist Novel," in *On the Israeli: Central Organ for Orthodox Judaism* (Frankfurt, 1903), p. 450.
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50. Rosenheim, "Zionist Hypnosis," in *Ohalei Yaakov*, vol. II, p. 345.
51. Rosenheim, "Contributions to the Orientation of Jewish Intellectual Life of the Future," in *Ohalei Yaakov*, vol. I, p. 98.
52. Herzl, *Journal*, in *Collected Zionist Works*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85.
53. Ibid., p. 25.
54. Ibid., p. 33.
55. Ibid., p. 46.
56. Ibid., p. 47.
57. Ibid., p. 75.
58. Ibid., p. 68.
59. Ibid., p. 47.
60. Ibid., p. 68.
61. Buber, "Why Must the Building-up of Palestine be Socialist?" in *The Jew and His Judaism*, p. 373.
62. Buber, "The Holy Way: A Word to the Jews and the Peoples," in *The Jew and His Judaism*, p. 90.
63. Buber, "Why Must the Building-up of Palestine be Socialist?", p. 373.



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# The Myth of Jewish "Colonialism": Demographics and Development in Palestine

david wollenberg

One of the most powerful and widespread arguments against Zionism and the State of Israel has been the claim that Jewish settlement in Palestine led directly to the displacement and exploitation of the land's long-established Arab population. In 1939, on the eve of the Holocaust and at the height of British attempts to divide the region into separate Arab and Jewish states, Jamal Husayni, spokesman for the effective government of Palestinian Arabs, forcefully raised this very argument against the Jewish national home:

> Is it in any way just, that the Arabs, who have lived on this land uninterruptedly for 1300 years, and whose lives are rooted in its soil—should be dispossessed by force, should be pushed aside, and should be blackmailed to enable the Zionist Jews to fashion a Jewish National Home on this land? That's the problem. . . .[1]

This was also the claim made by five Arab states to justify war against the State of Israel in 1948, just one day after it had declared its independence. According to this view, Jews had been absent from the land of Israel for too long to claim their right to return. In their absence, another group of people had come to occupy the land, and thus the Zionist movement could succeed only at this people's expense. The West, embarrassed by the horrors of the Holocaust, had founded the State of Israel to clear its conscience, and the Arab residents of Palestine were forced to pay the price. The creation of the Jewish State was thus an outrage, so the argument goes, because the very settlement of the land by Jews was illegitimate.

Yet this argument rests on an inaccurate description of the country's history, namely, a mischaracterization of the demographics of Palestine before 1948. For a number of reasons, both political and environmental, the Arab population of Palestine had been in a constant state of flux for much of the region's history. There was of course a small Arab population in Palestine that could trace its roots back for centuries. But overall, the Arab population, which had remained dormant for centuries, began to blossom only after the beginning of Jewish immigration and the subsequent improvements in economic conditions, infrastructure, and agricultural techniques. The idea of "uninterrupted settlement... rooted in its soil," is thus inconsistent with history. It was put forward primarily in an attempt to delegitimize Jewish immigration.

This essay will explore the various reasons for the Arab population shifts over time, focusing mainly on the first half of the twentieth century. Such an examination demonstrates that Jewish settlement in Palestine did not amount to the sudden disruption that Husayni and others claim, since there was no continuous national history or uniform population to disrupt. It also suggests that Jewish settlement was in many ways beneficial to the land and all of its inhabitants. In this light, it is clear that the two main tenets of the



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myth of Jewish "colonialism"—that Zionism uprooted a long-established nation and led to its uniform exploitation—are ideologically motivated distortions.

### Arab Demographics Prior to British Governance: Dramatic Underpopulation

From the period of the Crusades to the beginning of modern times, the population of Palestine remained at a near constant level.[2] This apparent stability is significant, as populations naturally tend to increase over time. It is estimated that there were 205,000 people living in Palestine in the mid 1500s.[3] By 1800, the population had only grown to 275,000, reflecting about a thousandth of a percent of average growth a year.[4] By 1890, still before any significant Jewish immigration, the population had made a slightly larger jump, to 532,000.[5] But even with this increase, the nineteenth century growth rate was still a small 0.7% per year.[6] By comparison, in the 1940s the Muslim growth rate in the Middle East was closer to 3.07%.[7]

A number of factors account for this dramatic underpopulation, one of which is environmental. Many people fled the area as early as the fourteenth century as a result of the Black Plague. Starting shortly thereafter, many areas became swamp-infested and malarial, especially in the northern valleys. There is much evidence to suggest that, by the mid-nineteenth century, the region had become nearly uninhabitable. Around this time, German Templars tried to settle the Kinrot Valley, where Jesus had lived, but were forced to leave due to the prevalence of malaria.[8] Jewish settlers in the 1880s attempted to inhabit the Hula valley, but in some places child mortality rates were nearly 100% because of disease.[9] The Talmud remarks, "If the Garden of Eden is in the Land of Israel, Beit-Shean is its gateway."[10] But when the scholar H.B. Tristram visited the area in the 1860s, traveling in the footsteps of Jesus, he claimed, "We saw not a tree.... It is scarcely conceivable how any human beings can inhabit such sites; but such is the contrast, nowhere more settling than here, between ancient civilization and modern degradation."[11] Mark Twain was disillusioned by his trip to the Holy Land. He wrote, "Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes... desolate and unlovely... it is dreamland."[12] Even by 1931, after many early Zionist efforts to clear the land, only a third of the whole region was cultivable.[13] No doubt, the lack of fertile land and presence of disease contributed to the comparatively limited population growth.

The higher growth rate of the nineteenth century (relative to the previous rates) must be attributed to a different set of conditions, namely major demographic shifts stemming from emigration and immigration. In 1831, Muhammad Ali of Egypt invaded the region to obtain raw materials and a market for his country's industrializing economy.[14] As a result of the violence, many *fellaheen*, or farmers, fled Palestine to neighboring regions. Yet these emigres were soon replaced by a new wave of farmers from Egypt seeking to escape their country's military draft.[15] According to the French scholar M. Sabry, the Egyptian governor Ibrahim Pasha brought over six thousand people to settle empty stretches of land in Palestine.[16] Although his leadership brought a greater sense of law and order to the land than ever before, the conquest precipitated a half-century of intertribal warfare, especially among the Bedouin.[17] The British decided that this instability threatened their economic interests in the region and forced Ibrahim to retreat to Egypt.[18] The net result of this upheaval was a positive but minor population increase. It would not be until the end of the century that modernizing developments would cause major demographic changes.

### British Control: Population Shifts and the Beginnings of Growth

With British control during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries came greater material stability and economic growth. As a result of the construction of railroad lines that led to the sea, the population of Haifa tripled and that of Jaffa more than doubled from 1880 to 1910.[19] But while the population shifted toward these areas, the overall growth rates for the country stayed low. According to British investigations, there were 689,275 persons in Palestine in 1915, about 590,000 of whom were Arab.[20] Given a



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population in 1890 of 532,000 (473,000 Arab), this still represents only a 0.8% per year growth rate.

Soon afterwards, during World War I, the Ottomans tried to muster troops from the region, prompting many of the upper classes to flee. It appears that the war prompted a massive flight, immediately followed by a huge influx. According to contemporary surveys, the Arab population declined by 35,000 during the years 1915 to 1919. While many Arabs may have fled to escape the draft, others were expelled by force. To defend against the British, the Ottomans, still nominally in control, expelled both Jews and Arabs from cities across the coast on the assumption that their nationalistic intentions could lead them to sympathize with the British invaders. This effort was massive: twenty-eight thousand Arabs were forced out of Gaza alone.[21] By 1922, however, just three years later, the Arab population had increased by 80,000 above the 1919 level.[22] After the War had ended and Britain had taken formal control of the area (with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire), Arab population rates recovered quickly and significantly. Many Arabs took advantage of the improved economic conditions that resulted from British administration; and by 1922, the population of Haifa—which had declined by 30% from 1915 to 1917 due to Ottoman expulsions[23]—had become greater than it was before the war.[24] The Zionists, also eager to take advantage of this economic growth, had hoped that the British government, the country's largest employer, would hire Jews in construction. But the British preferred cheaper foreign labor; and in the period leading up to 1922 they employed fifteen thousand foreigners (mostly from Egypt and Syria) and only five hundred Jews.[25] Despite this low employment rate, however, the Jewish population continued to grow through immigration. The increasing numbers of these two populations would soon lead to a significant clash.

### Approaching 1948: Economic Growth and the Population Burst

After years of relative stagnation, the few decades leading up to 1948 saw significant growth in both Arab and Jewish populations. Had the Arab population remained at its pre-WWI growth rate (0.8%) after 1922, one would have expected a population of approximately 785,000 by 1947. But there were in fact between 1.2 and 1.3 million Arabs in all of Palestine by 1947.[26] What could have caused this sudden burst?

To investigate possible causes, it is important to examine where in the country the growth took place. Non-Jewish population growth rates were highest within modern-day sovereign Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip regions. These rates cannot be explained by higher birth rates alone.

One major factor accounting for the unexpected growth was the potential for upward mobility that existed in the western cities. The wages of western cities were more attractive, no doubt bringing many people from surrounding areas. Port cities also offered greater employment opportunities, which helps explain the fact that there was a dramatic influx into Haifa and Jaffa relative to cities like Beit-Shean and Jerusalem.

After years of relative stagnation, the few decades leading up to 1948 brought significant growth in both the Arab and Jewish populations.

Another major reason for the population explosion was the revolution that took place in farming and thus in the ecosystem generally. Agriculture had been the main source of income of 90% of Muslims in 1931.[29] With the increase in Jewish immigration during this period, Arab farmers began to pressure the British to stop the Jewish influx, arguing that the land could not sustain any more inhabitants. The result was the Passfield White Paper of 1930, which claimed:

> It can now be definitely stated that at the present time and with the present methods of Arab culti-



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> vation there remains no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants, with the exception of such undeveloped land as the various Jewish agencies hold in reserve.[30]

Although this document would be repudiated only a year later, it reflects the widespread and strongly-held belief that the land's resources could not be shared. Yet this belief was based on the assumption that the state of agriculture could not improve, an assumption that experience would soon prove false.

One major reason for this improvement was swamp drainage. The project, largely conceived and carried out by Jewish immigrants with some British help, was enormous in magnitude. It provided dramatic health benefits in addition to large increases in the amount of arable land.

Another development in farming took the form of improved agricultural techniques. Formerly, according to historian Kenneth Stein, "the cultivated land was not very fertile or sufficiently irrigated. The failure or inability to use modern agricultural techniques such as manuring and mechanization kept yields to a minimum. Crop rotation was rarely practiced."[32] This would all change in a very short time.

Yet another reason for improvement was the growth of citriculture, the most profitable form of agriculture in the country.[33] From 1931 to 1937, land used for citriculture increased by almost 200%, with total citrus output rising 380%. During the same period, total wheat cultivation remained near constant, dropping about 4% in total area, but tripling in output. Arab agricultural techniques improved in other ways as well, resulting in increased production of produce, tobacco, watermelons, cattle, and fowl. With new farming techniques and more cultivable land, the naturally sustainable population increased exponentially.

### Another Piece of the Puzzle: Property Ownership

One of the major obstacles faced by Jewish immigrants who tried to purchase land prior to 1948 was the unique system of property ownership established in much of the country. In 1932, 117,869 dunam of land was held by absentee landowners. In most cases, tenant farmers worked the land, creating a dilemma for land purchasers.[34] Even after buying the land from the "real" owner, the tenant farmers would generally remain in place. In 1927, the British passed a law preventing the transfer of land without first securing new land for the tenant farmer or making a cash settlement.[35] Yet this had already been the policy of the Jewish Agency, which had explicitly sought to avoid controversy in its land purchases. The Shaw Commission reported:

> We think that the Jewish Companies are not open to any criticism in respect of these transactions. In paying compensation, as they undoubtedly did, to many of the cultivators of land which they purchased in the Plain of Esdraelon [Jezreel Valley] those companies were making a payment which at the time of the transactions the law of Palestine did not require. Moreover, they were acting with the knowledge of the Government.[36]

Despite this careful attention to the tenant farmers' reimbursement, Arab *fellaheen* often claimed that Jews had given them little or no compensation. In response, the British launched investigations into over 3000 claims, of which about 2500 were ultimately rejected.[37] For the 600 or so claims that were accepted, the Development Department was required to provide 60 dunam of irrigable land or a cash settlement that would presumably allow the farmer to move to a city.[38] The immigration of Jews to Palestine was thus done both legally and ethically.

But the local Arab elite's complaints about Jewish immigration were not about legality anyway. These leaders claimed that the presence of outsiders would destroy the Arab nature of the country, a claim that can still be heard among Palestinians and pro-Palestinian advocates today. Ironically, however, many of the strongest opponents of Jewish land purchases were also the people who profited most from them. A brief list of Arab leaders who sold land to Jews includes Fahmi el-Husayni, mayor of Gaza; Ragheb Nashashibi, mayor of Jerusalem and founder of the "National Defense Party"; Mussa el-'Alami, Government Advocate of the Palestine Government and a member of the Arab Higher Committee; As'ad el-Shuqairi, father of Ahmed



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Shuqairi, the first chairman of the P.L.O.; and Jamal el-Husayni, who is quoted at the beginning of this essay.[39] Of course, the Arab leadership attempted to suppress this information, but it was brought to public attention by Lewis French, the first director of the British Mandatory Government's Department of Development.[40] The news of the Arab leadership's hypocrisy eventually led to the collapse of the Arab Executive (the governing Arab body in the Mandate) in the early 1930s. It would not be until 1936 that another body of political leadership would come to exist, in the form of the Arab Higher Committee.[41]

HUSAYNI'S CLAIM OF 1300 YEARS of uninterrupted Arab presence in Palestine is clearly a convenient simplification. Any statements about the demographics of Palestine before 1948 must recognize the country's dynamic history. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of sweeping changes for the land and all the people living on it—Arab and Jew. After remaining nearly stagnant for centuries, the population exploded in modern times due to improved infrastructure, agriculture, and immigration, both Jewish and Arab. As a result, from 1890 to 1947, in less than sixty years, the population grew from 532,000 to 1,845,560.[42] The Arab population of Palestine grew more from 1922 to 1947 than it had over the previous 400 years. But the population shift that would occur over the following three years, as a result of the U.N. partition plan and the Arab-Israeli war, would be so momentous that it almost makes this prior data seem irrelevant. Each side blames the other for the consequences of the war, including some who point to the war as proof of "Zionist aggression." But even Benny Morris, the historian who argued that the Palestinian refugee problem was caused in part by Israeli military actions[43] points out that "the [refugee] problem was a direct consequence of the war that the Palestinians—and, in their wake, the surrounding Arab states—had launched."[44] From the beginning, it was Arab intolerance of the Jewish presence that caused the widespread opposition to Israel, an intolerance that resulted in the war of 1948. Jews, of course, had not chosen arbitrarily to immigrate to this area of the world. Moreover, they did so legally and with positive effects. As evidenced by the massive growth in population, the improvement of agriculture, and increased wages, the claim against Jewish return to Palestine was not pragmatic but ideological. The idea of a Jewish State as such was, from the beginning, anathema to the Arabs living there, and they sought to discredit and defeat it by any means possible. It is in this context that the birth of the Arab-Israeli conflict must be considered.



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*Notes*

1. Arieh Avneri, *The Claim of Dispossession* (Efal, Israel: Yad Tabenkin, 1982), p. 11.
2. Ibid, p. 12.
3. Ibid.
4. Including 246,000 Muslims and 22,000 Christians.
5. Including 432,000 Muslims and 57,000 Christians (total Arab population: 473,000). See Avneri, p.12.
6. Because only a total population statistic is available for 1800, and not a pure 'Arab population' statistic, this growth rate actually represents the total natural population increase. But given the overwhelming Arab majority at the time, it is a good approximation of the Arab growth statistic.
7. "A Survey of Palestine," prepared in December 1945 and January 1946 for the *Information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry*, Vol. II p. 714, as cited in Avneri, p. 252.
8. Avneri, p. 42.
9. Ibid, p. 41.
10. Erub. 19a.
11. Avneri, pp. 43-44.
12. Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, pp. 441-442.
13. Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 4.
14. William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 72.
15. Avneri, p. 13.
16. See Avneri p. 13.
17. Ibid, pp. 18-24.
18. Cleveland, p. 74.
19. Ibid, p. 27.
20. Ibid, p. 25.
21. Ibid, p. 28.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid, p. 30
25. Ibid.
26. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 8.
27. Notes compiled for U.N.S.C.O.P, pp. 12-13 (for data for December 31, 1946), as cited in Avneri, p. 255.
28. Avneri, p. 262.
29. Stein, p. 6.
30. Passfield White Paper, October 1930.
31. Avneri, p. 235.
32. Stein, p. 4.
33. Avneri, p. 259.
34. Stein, p. 179.
35. Avneri, p. 132
36. Ibid, p. 126.
37. Stein, p. 160.
38. Ibid, pp. 158-163.
39. Ibid, pp. 228-238.
40. Avneri, p. 233.
41. Ibid, p. 234.
42. Notes compiled for UNSCOP, p. 12, as cited in Avneri, p. 252.
43. Morris, p. 286.
44. Benny Morris, "Peace? No chance." *The Guardian* (UK). February 21, 2002.



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# Will there be Refuge for the Refugees?

benjamin smolley

> No reasonable human being can remain indifferent to the plight of refugees. Whatever the reason for the situation, the picture is the same: men, women, and children fleeing in fear of their lives, with terror in their eyes and despair in their faces. They are abandoning their possessions, their past, the place to which they are tied and from which they are being torn.... Their plight is one of the side effects of war, one of the results of the established use of violence.... Society must bear direct responsibility for the fate of war refugees, always and everywhere. Their plight is the work of humankind alone.[1]

This quote, in all of its poignancy and sympathy for the world of the refugee, was not uttered, as one might perhaps expect, by a Palestinian nationalist or Arab government official. Rather, it is attributable to former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. One cannot help but feel encouraged that despite decades of political strife and violence—employed seemingly without conscience and often against innocents—basic human values remain unchanged.

The refugees created by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War that established the State of Israel's independence remain one of the major stumbling blocks to a final Middle East settlement. Not much has changed since the first evaluation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, whose mission it was to improve the refugees' lot after the War. The Agency reported: "We would emphasize once more that the magnitude and the danger inherent in the Near East Refugee problem needs the fullest understanding and support of the nations of the world."[2]

This controversy, vehemently disputed for over a half-century and muddled by partisan distortion of fact, is not one that will be solved easily. Various proposals have entered the political arena since 1948, including the two-state solution, full repatriation, and compensation by Israel. One such proposal, the idea of absorption, was considered quite seriously after the War, but has since nearly disappeared from public discourse. Yet an analysis of the idea's history and contemporary implications suggests that perhaps it should no longer be dismissed.

### The Refugee "Problem": Abnormally Persistent

According to a United Nations estimate, the number of Arabs who fled Palestine as a result of the war was roughly 720,000. Of these, about 70,000 crossed into Transjordan (now Jordan), 100,000 settled in Lebanon, 75,000 fled to Syria, and smaller groups traveled to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Roughly 200,000 refugees landed in Egypt, all but 7,000 of whom were contained in the tiny Gaza Strip, at that time under Egyptian control. Finally, 280,000 fled to the West Bank, which was then occupied by Transjordan.[3]

In historical and comparative perspective, the Palestinian refugee problem is abnormal. Many have pointed out that refugee problems of much larger dimensions have been solved elsewhere in a far shorter



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time. Consider the 400,000 refugees absorbed by Finland after its war with Russia, or the 15 million absorbed by Germany, 2.5 million absorbed by Korea, and 15 million by India and Pakistan. Why did these large groups of refugees cease to be international problems? History has shown that nations tend to absorb refugees who are their national and religious kin.[4] In this case, however, the states surrounding Israel deliberately chose to reject their Arab kinsmen.

Of course, the most apparent difficulty in resolving the problem is that many of the refugees themselves prefer to return "home." However, it is itself unique that the refugees still consider land in Israel proper to be "home." Peres understands and empathizes with the refugees' powerful attachment to their former land. At the same time, however, he suggests that this sentiment may be an emotional attachment born of the anomie and horrid physical condition in which they currently live. As he says,

> For the first generation of refugees, the experience of being a refugee and the culture that grew up around it served as a basis for the consciousness of exile from the land of their birth—the loss of the country, house, lands, landscapes familiar from childhood, and family graves—alongside the hope of returning to their homes. The second and third generations have inherited this experience, a powerful emotive load that grows ever stronger amid crushing poverty and degrading conditions in the refugee camps.[5]

The report of the Saudi Arabian mission quoted above also emphasizes the experience of the first generation of refugees. It particularly stresses the feelings of nostalgia and longing fostered by life in the camps. "It is heartrending for the refugees to see across the armistice line their homes and farms, and yet not be able to enjoy their farms, to enter their homes. Within eyesight, they gaze at their towns and their villages, but they cannot walk into their towns and villages."[6] Denied the opportunity to build new lives, they could only remain fixated on the nearby places they once called home.

### The Aftermath of 1948: Roots of the Current Situation

The idea that the refugees should resettle in neighboring Arab countries came to the fore immediately after Israel's War of Independence. Sir Hugh Dow, the British consul-general in Jerusalem in 1948, was one of the first to suggest that this was indeed the best solution to the problem.[7] He also proposed that Israel pay for some of the refugees' resettlement, in conjunction with a British "Lord Mayor's Fund." Yet at the same time, Dow also anticipated one of the major obstacles to implementing this solution. He predicted that the Arab League would oppose absorption because, as a "purely humanitarian and practical" program, it would "not fit in with their political desire to rid themselves of refugees in their territories... and to send large Arab populations back into Jewish areas as a nucleus for future trouble."[8] Indeed, this is precisely what happened and why the idea has been rejected to this day.

Israeli historian Benny Morris devotes many pages of his book, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians*, to the deplorable conditions endured by the refugees in Arab countries, particularly at the early stages. At this time, the governments of Transjordan, Egypt, and Lebanon failed to address the presence and needs of their new populations. A message to King Abdullah of Transjordan transmitted via the Arab Legions' radio communications system provides a rough yet representative picture of this early situation. "Seventy thousand people are scattered in the streets, the great majority of them impoverished [and] suffering from a major lack of basic goods and water, constituting a serious health hazard.... The municipal council beseeches Your Highness to issue [an order] to the city of Ramallah to evict the refugees as the city cannot cope." In response, Abdullah demanded unsympathetically that the city's residents display "patience towards your brothers."[9]

Furthermore, while the cursory diplomatic investigations of Britain and America revealed that the refugees' living conditions "were by and large 'appalling,'" they also indicated that "most of the Arab states were doing little, if anything, for their relief."[10] Though



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Abdullah appealed to his fellow Arab leaders for aid, he received only promises from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Abdullah and his Prime Minister claimed that "some of the Arab states best able to bear a heavy burden...are doing the least of all."[11]

According to Morris, Arab and Western leaders understood from the start that the refugee camps were politically dangerous and insufficient. A supervisor of the camps in Lebanon illustrated this general feeling in 1948 when he said that the camps could easily lead to "an intensification of the feeling of isolation and frustration, which is the tendency of many of the refugees."[12] In other words, anyone marginally concerned about the plight of these people realized the problems of permanent refugee status, including the social psychology that such status would produce. However, even as early as 1949, many foreign leaders also understood that full repatriation, the re-entry of Arab refugees into the newly created State of Israel, was out of the question, primarily for security reasons. The alternative preferred by some American observers was organized resettlement in the Arab countries. The U.S. consul-general in Jerusalem (who, as Morris points out, was usually unfriendly to Israeli causes) reported that "political security is best served by settling refugees in Arab states. Returning refugees [to Israel] would create continuing minority problem and form constant temptation both to uprisings and intervention by neighboring Arab states."[13]

For years, Arab leaders have chosen to prolong the refugee problem.

### Why the Prolonged Failure to Absorb?

Peres' analysis of the situation is simple yet incisive. "The leaders of the Arab countries—apart from Jordan, under the leadership of King Hussein—have chosen to prolong the refugee problem for forty-six years.... The reasons for this were that the countries involved feared disruption and the introduction of revolutionary ideas into their lands. The Palestinians paid—and continue to pay—the price, and have become a nation of refugees."[14]

Academic literature on the refugee question has identified many causes and responsibilities for the prolongation of the problem. This essay may discuss them only briefly. Saudi Arabia, for instance, was at first considered a possible site for refugee resettlement. Yet because the Saudi economy was based on oil and a small agricultural sector, it could absorb very few new citizens. Figuring even more prominently in the decision was the possibility of political turmoil. The Palestinians had, under British leadership, become accustomed to a semi-free press and other incipient democratic institutions. They would thus have found it quite difficult to accept the absolute rule of the Saudi king.

The situation in Lebanon was in some ways quite similar. Due to catastrophically high unemployment and a relatively small population, the government was wary of absorption in large numbers. Yet American historian Joseph Schechtman suggests that Lebanon may have been more capable of resettling the refugees than initially believed. He cites the recent finding of an international committee that the irrigated area for farming could have been increased five-fold, thereby accommodating many more inhabitants.[15] He also notes that the country had profited financially from the influx of wealthy refugees after the war.

While there may have been legitimate economic and political reasons for Saudi Arabia and Lebanon's failure to absorb the refugees in the decade after 1948, it appears that Syria and Iraq could indeed have facilitated Palestinian resettlement. Syria, for instance, stood to *gain* by an absorption policy. Schechtman points out that Syria was severely underpopulated at this time, with only 3.6 million people living in a region that once supported 20 million. Fertile topsoil was—and still is—available yet uncultivated there;



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all that is missing is a viable irrigation system. The U.N. Department of Economic Affairs also noted Syria's great potential. "The extension of irrigation and the bringing into cultivation of all cultivable lands would make it possible for Syria to increase her present farm population... [by] about 6 million souls."[16] Syria's Jezira Province was particularly noted for its untapped absorptive capacity.[17] Agricultural work would have been an attractive alternative to the idleness of life in the refugee camps, which has so often led to rebellion and violence. To this day, young men in Syrian camps supply a great deal of the manpower for radical groups and terrorist organizations.[18]

Iraq, too, was and continues to be in a position to benefit from an absorption policy. Iraq's own officials indicated the need for a more populous agricultural sector; the Baghdad Hydraulic Section head reported that Iraq could absorb 3.5 million people to help cultivate acres made available by irrigation projects.[19] An Egyptian newspaper even quoted Iraq's Foreign Minister as expressing a willingness to absorb "all" Palestinian refugees:

> The problem of the refugees is a political card ... Iraq alone could absorb all the Arab refugees. In Iraq there are large stretches of fertile land which are not being exploited. Iraq is in need of manpower and can use more than 5 million workers. Even if such a number is found, fertile land will still be available. Iraq will agree to make all Palestinian refugees Iraqi citizens and thus contribute in a big way to the solution of the Palestine problem.[20]

Why, then, did the refugees remain in the camps, where many remain until today?[21] The American Embassy initially wrote, in speaking of Iraq, that the Palestinians, "despite their common Arab culture... would be likely to form another unassimilated, discontented minority group."[22] Yet while such internal considerations clearly played a role, a large part of the Arabs' refusal was calculated anti-Israel politics. As Morris reports, the Palestine Conciliation Committee's American representative, Mark Etheridge, was privy to Arab leaders' thoughts on this issue as early as 1949:

> A major reason for the Arab unwillingness to properly absorb and resettle the refugees...was rooted in their struggle against Israel rather than in internal political or economic and social considerations. The Arabs saw in the 700,000 or 800,000 refugees a political weapon against the Jews... . The Arabs sought the refugees' repatriation, both as a demand of justice and as a means to subvert the Jewish State. Hence, it was better to leave the refugees living in squalor... than to support and implement resettlement schemes... .[23]

Thus the refugees, by the hundreds of thousands, remained in the camps, often oblivious to the opportunities that would be theirs for the taking were they allowed entry into the other Arab states.

### Repatriation: Returning to a Maximalist Deadlock?

Repatriation may be one of what King Hussein of Jordan once called "senseless illusions," ideas that one must "have the courage to bury."[24] Repatriation is not the answer, he said, but a

> maximal claim that... if accepted, would wipe out the national character of the State of Israel, making the Jewish majority into a minority. Consequently, there is no chance it will be accepted, either now or in the future. No Israeli government would agree to a strategy that entailed the destruction of its national entity.[25]

Schechtman elucidates the danger of wholesale repatriation, quoting then-Israeli Foreign Minister Sharett's remarks to the United Nations in 1950. "Above all," he said, "there is the paramount consideration of security. The obvious purpose of the Arab champions of repatriation is to blow up the Jewish State from within."[26] As recently as 1989, Egyptian President



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Hosni Mubarak concurred. "The Palestinian demand for the 'right of return' is totally unrealistic," he said, "and would have to be solved by means of financial compensation and resettlement in Arab countries."[27]

It is difficult to mount a credible opposition to this sentiment. Arab primary sources are rife with the suggestion of using the repatriated Arabs as a Trojan Horse. Schechtman refers to the February 17, 1949 issue of the Arabic newspaper *Al-Sayyad*: "We are unable to return [the refugees] honorably. Let us therefore try to make them our fifth column in the struggle yet before us. Up to now [the Jews] argued that there was a state of war between us and one could not ask them to accept soldiers, enemies, into their midst. But at present, if we shall appear in the guise of peace-seekers, they will have no argument."[28] The April 6, 1950 issue of *Al-Sayyad* urged the repatriation of the refugees because it would "create a large Arab majority that would serve as the most effective means of reviving the Arab character to Palestine while forming a powerful fifth column for the day of revenge and reckoning."[29]

Almost fifty years later, in 1999, then-Minister of Refugee Affairs for the Palestinian Authority As'ad Abd-Al Rahman demanded that Palestinians be allowed "to return... to their homes and property," even while admitting that this idea "is tantamount to the destruction of Israel in Israeli political culture."[30] Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, also upheld the right of return despite the threat it poses to Israel. "The fact that the Zionist project requires a Jewish majority," he said, "does not justify a concession of the legitimate right [of the refugees] to return and to receive compensations."[31] While some Palestinian leaders advocate return to an autonomous Palestinian state, others like Rahman and top official Abu Mazen continue to argue that Palestinians must be allowed to return to their original homes—even if these homes are now in Israel proper. According to Mazen, "the Palestinians must be given the right to choose where they live, and that includes returning to the homes out of which they were driven."[32] As one can easily imagine, this would often require uprooting Israelis.

WHILE THE TERM "DISASTER" has become synonymous among Arabs with the establishment and victory of Israel in 1948, the undeniable *real* disaster is what followed, the impasse and failure to deal humanely with the Palestinian refugees. In absorption, the solution to the miserable plight of the Palestinian refugees seemed very attainable, and the confluence of factors—including underpopulation, close geographic location, and the sharing of a similar culture—seemed to make the plan quite viable. Yet although it has been consistently opposed by many Arab states, it need not be abandonned as an option for the future.

Artz and Peretz outline a modified absorption proposal that also includes compromise on both sides. They advocate that, since conditions remain favorable for absorbing Palestinians in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, absorption there ought to be explored as soon as possible. However, these authors also propose that Israel absorb a symbolic number to allow for regional balance. Absorption could also facilitate cooperation on the issue of refugee compensation. Some suggest that Israeli funds could be used to finance development projects that would help absorb the refugees on a large scale. This would benefit the Arab states while simultaneously promoting Israel's security interests.

Before such solutions enter the realm of possibility, however, both Israel and the Arabs must be willing to compromise. The Israeli government must be prepared to provide economic incentives for relocation and to support the Arab states in their absorption efforts. On the other side, Arabs must abandon the call for full repatriation. As most readily admit, this scheme would destroy Israel's character as a Jewish State and undermine the entire nature of the Zionist project. Even more fundamentally, then, the Arab world must fully accept Israel's long-term presence in the region. It is in such recognition and compromise—and, most importantly, in looking to the future—that a solution may yet be found.



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### *Notes*

1. Shimon Peres, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), pp. 181-183.
2. Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations, *The Palestinian Refugees: Statements Made by His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Shukairy, Minister of State for United Nations Affairs* (New York: United Nations, 1958), p. 5.
3. Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47.
4. See Deborah Kaplan, *The Arab Refugees: An Abnormal Problem* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1959), p. 7.
5. Peres, p. 189.
6. Saudi Arabian Mission, p. 4.
7. Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 299.
8. Public Records Office (London), Foreign Office Papers 371-68576 (E10235/4/31), H. Dow, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, July 29, 1948 and (E10219/10006/4), Amman to Foreign Office, July 29, 1948, as cited in Morris, p. 299.
9. National Archives (Washington D.C.) 501 BB. Palestine/7-1548, Amman to Secretary of State, July 15, 1948; Israel State Archives, Foreign Ministry Papers, 2569/13, July 21, 1948; PRO, FO 371-68578 (E10440/4/31), Sir H. Dow, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, July 19, 1948; and ISA, FM 2569/13, the Research Department (the Foreign Ministry's intelligence department), to Y. Shimoni, July 19, 1948, as cited in Morris, p. 296.
10. PRO, FO 371-68677 (E1088/4/31), Cairo to Foreign Office, August 16, 1948; and FO 371-68677 (E11025/10748/31), Amman to Foreign Office, August 18, 1948, as cited in Morris, p. 303.
11. Ibid.
12. NA 501. BB Palestine/12-2748, "Minutes of the Fifth Meeting with Voluntary Agencies," Beirut, December 3, 1948, as cited in Morris, p. 315.
13. NA 501. BB Palestine/2-949, Burdett (Jerusalem) to Secretary of State, February 9, 1949, as cited in Morris, p. 315.
14. Peres, p. 187.
15. The Clapp Commission's Economic Survey was initiated in 1999 by the Palestine Conciliation Commission, a group formed by the United States, France, and Turkey under U.N. Resolution 194. See Joseph Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), pp. 82-83.
16. "Population Movement and Population Pressure in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria": *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, October, 1951, pp. 389-390, as cited in Schechtman, p. 78.
17. According to Schectman, high rainfall and fertile soil in Jezira would have allowed for increased output even in already cultivated areas. See also Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon* (London: 1946), p. 140 and Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East* (London: 1949), pp. 89-90. Schechtman goes on to state that the reason the 200,000 refugees recommended for absorption were not settled in late 1948 was because of the volatility of Syrian currency and finance at that time.
18. See, for instance, the pamphlet of the Public Affairs Institute, *The Middle East and The Refugees: A Program to Counter the Soviet Menace in the Middle East* (Washington: Public Affairs Institute), p. 28.
19. Public Affairs Institute, p. 29.
20. Ibid.
21. The question of how many refugees remain in the camps is an extremely controversial one.
22. NA 501. BB Palestine/2-749, Baghdad to Secretary of State, February 7, 1949, as cited in Morris, p. 318.
23. NA 501. BB Palestine/3-2849, Beirut to Secretary of State, March 28, 1949, as cited in Morris, pp. 318-319.
24. Donna Arzt and Don Peretz, "The Palestinian Refugees," *Middle East Policy* 7:2 (February 2000), p. 2.
25. Peres, p. 189.
26. Schechtman, p. 23.
27. See Mitchell G. Bard and Joel Himelfard, *Myths and Facts: A Concise Record of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Washington: Near East Report, 1992), p. 136.
28. Schechtman, pp. 23-24.
29. Schechtman, p. 24. A second reason for the impossibility of repatriation is that the refugees now have "no home to return to," either because their land has been developed and put to other uses by Israelis or because the absorptive capacity of Israel has been exhausted by Jewish immigration. Though a fair assessment of this claim is beyond the scope of this paper, it suffices to note that few Arabs contend that an influx of refugees to Israel would not create a pressing security threat.
30. *Al-Dustur* (Jordan), August 16, 1999. Translation courtesy of M.E.M.R.I.
31. *Shaml*, Appendix to *Al-Ayyam* (Palestinian Authority), December 4, 2000. Courtesy of M.E.M.R.I.
32. *Al Ayyam*, January 2, 2001. Courtesy of M.E.M.R.I.



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# THE OLD-NEW P.L.O.

eric trager

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS of the Israeli-Palestinian con-flict expect that a resolution will involve Yassir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (P.A.). Yet although this notion is a popular one, an honest look at history reveals that it is dangerously misguided. It is a product of a mentality that searches for comfortable diplomatic solutions before adequately confronting an uncomfortable reality. Created by one such attempted solution, the Oslo Accords of 1993, the P.A. has, since its founding, continued to endorse and sponsor terrorist activity while oppressing its own people. Despite its initial agreement to dismantle terrorist organizations and establish a legitimate democratic government in the territories it provisionally received from Israel, the P.A. has supported the killing of innocent Israeli civilians, encouraged rejectionism of Israel through its own media channels, and violated the basic principles of an open society that respects the rule of law.

The Oslo Accords sought to end years of violence between Israel and the Palestinians by transforming the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) from an umbrella group for terrorist organizations into a stable self-government. In exchange for the promise that the P.A. would promote peaceful coexistence, Israel granted it land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and autonomy as a ruling body. This was clearly the greatest flaw of Oslo: Israel traded land for promises, exchanging a tangible for intangibles that would never be fulfilled. In signing an agreement that had no provision for ensuring that the P.L.O. would keep its end of the bargain, Israel put itself in a most vulnerable position, ultimately allowing the creation of an authoritarian regime with terrorist ties in its own backyard. Thus, before insisting that Israel return to the negotiating table with Arafat and his partners in the P.A., diplomats and other observers might do well to consider the history and continued brutality of this regime.

## The P.L.O.

The rejectionism and terrorist violence of the P.A. should come as no surprise to Israel, for it has long confronted the very same tendencies in the P.L.O. Founded in 1964 at the First Palestinian Conference in Jerusalem, the P.L.O. was created to be the political representative of Arab refugees from Israel's War of Independence. These refugees were living largely in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, then occupied by Jordan and Egypt, respectively. At that time, there were no "occupied territories" as the term is generally used today. Rather, tor the P.L.O., all of Israel was "occupied territory." The Palestinian National Charter, the definitional document of the movement, vowed solemnly to annihilate the Jewish State by force. In its own words, its purpose was to "amass its forces... to continue its struggle and to move forward on the path of holy war (*al jihad*) until complete and final victory has been attained."[1]

Initially, the P.L.O. intended to rely on the support of the Arab nations surrounding Israel to unseat



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the Israeli government and replace it with its own. Yet after Egypt, Syria, and Jordan failed to defeat Israel in the Six Day War of 1967, the P.L.O. turned to a strategy of guerilla warfare. Egyptian-born Yassir Arafat, leader of the Fatah movement, became leader of the P.L.O. and, with the backing of the Syrian government, worked to increase the organization's military strength.[2] Soon thereafter, in 1968, it launched a series of small guerilla attacks on Israel from its headquarters in Jordan. Israel responded swiftly, and under the command of General Ariel Sharon, bulldozed roads within Palestinian camps and stationed armored vehicles to patrol them.[3]

Thus suppressed by Israeli security measures, the P.L.O. turned its military focus against Jordan, questioning the legitimacy of the then-ruling Hashemite government. King Hussein of Jordan became increasingly wary of threats to his regime and jailed a Palestinian leader who voiced open criticism. The P.L.O. responded by seizing a hotel in downtown Amman, holding its European guests hostages, abducting and murdering a United States military attaché, and wounding a French diplomat.[4] Although King Hussein initially agreed to meet some of the P.L.O.'s demands—most notably veto rights over cabinet appointments—he decided soon thereafter that he had no choice but to strike back. In September of 1970, King Hussein launched his army against P.L.O. strongholds, expelling the P.L.O. from Jordan in 1971. The Palestinian guerilla forces retreated largely to Lebanon.

With at least seven armed guerilla groups operating out of Lebanon by the early 1970s, the P.L.O. refocused its attention against Israel, launching a number of small campaigns against northern Israeli villages. In March of 1978, a group of Palestinian terrorists crossed the northern Israeli border, murdered an American tourist on a beach, and hijacked a civilian bus, killing 34. Israel responded militarily, and a wave of violence ensued. The P.L.O. ignored the ceasefire brokered by the United States in July of 1981, committing 270 terrorist attacks through June of 1982.[5] During this period, it built a tremendous arsenal, equipped with enough light arms for five brigades, along with mortars, Katyusha rockets, and an antiaircraft network.[6] Finally, when Palestinians attempted to assassinate Israeli Ambassador to Britain Shlomo Argov in June of 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon. After over a year of fighting, Israel had captured Beirut, defeated Arafat's forces, and withdrawn, leaving behind 1,000 soldiers to help patrol a security zone on Lebanon's southern border.[7]

Despite its withdrawal from Lebanon, the P.L.O.'s agressive tactics did not wane. Most notably, it orchestrated a violent Palestinian uprising, or intifada, that began in 1987 and lasted until 1993. The leading group of the uprising, the Unified Leadership of the intifada, was dominated by the P.L.O. It frequently issued leaflets establishing where and when the violent attacks against Israeli civilians would take place.[8] The intifada also took its toll on Arabs whom Yassir Arafat deemed to be collaborating with Israel. The "intrafada," as it came to be known, sought to cleanse the territories of Palestinian dissidents, whose "offenses" ranged from working in Israel's Civil Administration in the West Bank and Gaza to merely having contact with Jews.[9] Through the repeated maiming and killing of suspected Arab informers, the intrafada claimed the lives of over 1,000 Palestinians.[10]

The P.L.O. continued its onslaught against Israel by playing an active role in the Persian Gulf War. Arafat believed that a powerful Iraq would help the Palestinians to oust the Israeli government. Thus, P.L.O. officials in Kuwait provided critical intelligence information to Saddam Hussein, enabling Iraq's invasion.[11] One even declared that he was prepared to send 50,000 Palestinian fighters to protect Iraq.[12] Once the war began, Arafat was adamant in his support for Saddam Hussein, declaring his regime "the defender of the Arab nation, of Muslims and of free men everywhere."[13] Even after Iraq's defeat, Arafat continued to vocally support Hussein.

Thus, when Israel arrived at peace talks in Oslo in 1993, it was bargaining with a partner that had been conspiring with terrorist organizations for decades; had encouraged attacks on Israeli civilians; had killed nearly 1,000 of its own people for disagreeing with its policies; and had supported Saddam Hussein against the United States. Though at the time observers throughout the world viewed Oslo with great hope—as the harbinger of security for Israelis and self-deter-



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mination for beleaguered Palestinians—many now realize that Israel had overlooked or simply chosen to ignore the real intentions of its bargaining partner. The result, as we see today, is that the same rejectionism and violence once instigated by the P.L.O. continues under the auspices of an armed and legitimized P.A.

### The Oslo Accords

The 1993 Oslo Agreement and subsequent 1995 Oslo Interim Agreement took measures towards establishing a democratic Palestinian state that would recognize and coexist with Israel. Signed by Arafat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yizhak Rabin, the Accords attempted to end the violence of the intifada in a reasonable, diplomatic way. Yet in putting complete faith in this political solution, Israel consented to establish, legitimize, and arm a force that has never fully accepted its existence. This blind optimism, on the part of both Israelis and the international community, is evidenced by the vagueness of the Accords themselves. In this agreement, Israel conceded land and conferred power on the P.A. in exchange for unclearly delineated duties and, in the end, unfulfilled promises.

The Oslo Agreement first laid the groundwork for the founding of the P.A. It stipulated that internationally observed, "direct, free, and general political elections" would be held upon Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho.[14] Along with the establishment of the elected Palestinian Council, the Agreement allowed for a strong Palestinian police force.[15] The 1995 Oslo Interim Agreement further detailed the functions of the Palestinian Council, including an executive committee within the Council to be called the Executive Authority. One significant weakness of this part of the Accords was the breadth of power it attributed to the Executive Authority, including the complete power to determine its own internal procedures and decision making processes.[16] The unlimited nature of the Executive Authority's role in Palestinian government is in part what led to its corruption, allowing Yassir Arafat to take near-dictatorial control of the P.A.

Although both the 1993 and 1995 phases of the Oslo Accords outlined measures for cooperative efforts between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the logistical details of Israel's withdrawal from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neither provided adequately for Israel's security needs. The Interim Agreement stipulated that it would be the job of the Palestinian police to "act systematically against all expressions of violence and terror."[17] Although it placed responsibility for controlling terrorist organizations on the P.A., the Agreement did not provide a system of checks by which Israel could ensure that this end of the bargain was met. Furthermore, in assuming that Israeli and Palestinian police would willingly share intelligence in order to crack down on terrorist organizations, the negotiators did not set up a clear enough procedure through which such information would be exchanged. As a result, while Israel has frequently provided Arafat with lists of known terrorists, the P.A. has refused to make the necessary arrests. By thus overestimating the goodwill of Arafat and his colleagues, Oslo failed ensure that such basic confidence-building measures would be taken.

The Interim Agreement also included provisions requiring Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to acquire licenses in order to carry firearms. It placed responsibility for keeping up-to-date license records and seizing unlicensed weapons on the Palestinian police.[18] Yet once again, the Agreement did not explicitly outline the method by which Israel could ensure that this clause would be met, and the provision was never implemented adequately.

Moreover, in opting to legitimize its enemy in exchange for promises of peace and security, Israel sent the message that it was weakened from years of vio-

Today, the rejectionism and violence of the P.L.O. continues under the auspices of an armed and legitimized P.A.



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lence and thus desperate to reach a settlement. In short, the message it sent to the P.L.O. was that its terrorist tactics had worked. In this light, it seems that the misguided optimism that underlay Oslo—based as it was on a mistaken belief in the willingness of the P.L.O. to compromise—not only led to an agreement that did not adequately consider Israel's security needs but, in giving the appearance that Israel was weak, simultaneously encouraged the use of violence as an effective political tool.

### The P.A. and its Failures

The Oslo Accords gave the P.L.O. legitimacy in the form of the P.A., while Israel agreed to withdraw from lands with only a minimal recognition of its true priority in seeking peace: internal security. With its newfound legitimacy, the P.A. proceeded to establish a government that denies its people basic civil liberties, fills government-controlled media with anti-Israel propaganda, refuses to disassemble terrorist organizations, and continues to support and participate in acts of terror against civilians.

Life under the P.A. is oppressive. As during the "intrafada" of the late 1980s, the P.A. has exploited its power by fixing elections, depriving Palestinians of basic social welfare, reversing West Bank court decisions, and detaining its own citizens without charges.

Consider, for example, the financial corruption of the P.A. In a report published in 1997, the Palestinian Council "found that $326 million of the Palestinian Authority's $800 million annual budget had been squandered through corruption and mismanagement."[18] The corruption has taken place among those closest in rank to Arafat. Consider Information and Culture Minister Yassir Abed Rabbo's use of $7,500 from the ministry budget to install a central heating system in his home; high-ranking official Abu Mazin's million-dollar home; Civil Affairs Minister Jamal Tarifi and Planning Minister Nabil Sha'th's misappropriation of funds from foreign donors; and Transportation Minister Ali Qawashma acceptance of bribes to license illegal cars.[19] The indulgences of Palestinian leaders have not gone unnoticed by the Palestinian public; in a survey conducted in June 1997, 62 percent of Palestinians said they believed the P.A. was corrupt and just over 50 percent supported a vote of no-confidence against Arafat's administration.[20]

Challenges to Arafat's authority, however, have been almost entirely suppressed by his authoritarian regime. The democratic procedures outlined in Oslo were abandoned when the Palestinian government held its first elections in 1996. The P.A. closed down newspapers, restricted telephone access, and intimidated campaign workers in a successful attempt to suppress opposition.[21] It bribed candidates to withdraw from the election and overruled the voting of the Fatah primaries by replacing the victors with handpicked candidates from established Palestinian clans.[22] Arafat further assured his victory by allowing the P.A. police to monitor Palestinians as they voted in over 100 polling sites.[23]

In addition to failing to fulfill the governmental procedures outlined by Oslo, the P.A. has consistently refused to crack down on terrorists. The current intifada is simply an extension of the pattern of violence begun after Oslo with a wave of terrorist bombings. At the time, Arafat and the P.A. consistently found many a reason to justify the attacks. In 1995, the P.A. claimed that the two terrorist bombers who murdered 21 Israeli bus passengers did so out of anger regarding increased security and checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yet such security measures were an inevitable, and reasonable, Israeli response to three years of mounting terrorist activity.[24] The P.A. has also unceasingly encouraged *jihad* and martyrdom through the tightly controlled Palestinian media. In one radio advertisement, Arafat recalls the death of a 12 year-old child caught in Israeli-Palestinian crossfire and urges other Palestinian children to join him in paradise by becoming child martyrs.[25]

Recent months have demonstrated even more conclusively that Arafat never intended to crack down on terrorists nor to encourage recognition of Israel among the Palestinian people. Prospects for peace have grown increasingly dim since the summer of 2000, when after rejecting a peace plan that included Palestinian control of East Jerusalem, Arafat balked at offering a



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counter-proposal and opted instead to unleash a wave of violence that has continued until today.

In response to the Palestinian terror attack that took place on the first night of the Passover holiday, noted Israeli columnist Yossi Klein Halevi wrote:

> For Israelis, there is something surreal in the world's preoccupation with political solutions to the Middle East crisis. Mitchell-Tenet, the Zinni mission, the Saudi plan—all assume a conflict amenable to rational solutions, a Palestinian leadership ready to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish State. But Arafat in his besieged office proclaiming his desire to die like the seder suicide bomber—'Oh God, give me martyrdom like this,' he told [the P.A. television station] *Al Jazeera* on March 29—should have put to rest the fantasies of the peace-makers. Does anyone imagine that the Israeli public—even those of us who in principle are ready for almost any concession in exchange for real peace—will accept a plan that involves 'sharing' Jerusalem with Arafat?[26]

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is still affirmative. Journalists, European leaders, and certainly many in the Arab world continue to expect that Israel will negotiate with Arafat or, failing that, with officials close to him in the ranks of the P.A. Such stubborn legitimation of the P.A. betrays either a dangerously unrealistic analysis of the situation or intentional malice towards Israel. As the tragedy of September 11 demonstrated, nations whose governments support and participate in terrorist acts pose a serious threat to innocent civilians worldwide and must be held accountable. A peace process that recognizes the P.A. as the government of a Palestinian state will only strengthen the belligerent threat against Israel and tacitly sanction the terrorist approach that threatens the world at large.

**Eric Trager, Harvard Class of 2005, is from Queens, New York.**

*Notes*

1. *Palestinian National Charter*, para 3.
2. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: From The Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (San Diego: Alfred Knopf, 2001), 683.
3. Ibid, p. 685.
4. Ibid.
5. Mitchell Bard, "Lebanon War," www.us-israel.or/jsource/History/Lebanon_War.html, para 2.
6. Ibid, para 3.
7. Ibid, para 18.
8. Joel Greenberg and Michal Sela, "Palestinians Reject U.S. Criticism of Terror Bids," *Jerusalem Post* March 14, 1989, p. 1.
9. Sachar, p. 965.
10. Ibid.
11. Mitchell Bard, "The Gulf War," www.us-israel.or/jsource/ History/Gulf_War, para 46.
12. Ibid, para 44.
13. *Declaration of Principles On Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, III:1 and V:1.
14. Ibid, VIII.
15. *Oslo Interim Agreement*, V:2.
16. *Oslo Interim Agreement*, Annex I, II:2:b.
17. Ibid, II:2:c.
18. Kenneth C.W. Leiter, "Palestinian Authority," *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1998, p. 47.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid, p. 41.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Derek Brown, "Israel wants Proof P.L.O. Is Getting Tough on Terrorists; Palestinians Decry Decision to Extend Border Closing," *The Ottawa Citizen*, February 6, 1995, p. A5.
25. Tom Rose, "The End of Oslo," *The Weekly Standard*, June 18, 2001, p. 27.
26. Yossi Klein Halevi, "Agoraphobia," *The New Republic*, April 2, 2002, p. 20.



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reihan salam

# Azmi Bishara and the Rhetoric of Binationalism

As of this writing, Azmi Bishara, member of the Knesset, academic philosopher, and a leading "Palestinian patriot," to use his term of choice, is standing trial for violating Israel's Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance. He has been accused of inciting violence by, among other things, praising Hezbollah. Shortly after the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, Bishara—again, a citizen of Israel and a member of its supreme legislative body—reportedly said "Hezbullah has won and for the first time since 1967, we have tasted the sweet taste of victory." It is this "*we*" that is of particular interest. After all, this "sweet taste of victory" is, as only the painfully naïve or painfully meretricious would deny, bound up with the murder of Israeli citizens. Which "we" is in question?

The answer is, of course, the "Palestinian people," a collectivity which, for a Bishara at least, transcends the demands of mere citizenship, including, one presumes, the minimal civic obligation to refrain from killing one's compatriots, or anyone else for that matter, without due cause. By now, the ferocious opposition of many Palestinian-identified Israeli citizens to the survival of Israel is a commonplace, an unmistakable feature of the increasingly ugly political landscape. Leaving aside the (crucially important) historical negotiations that have brought us to this point, this depth of animosity has theoretical implications which are, I submit, worthy of scrutiny. Specifically, what does this enduring hatred—which is by no means one-sided, certainly not now—mean for the prospects of a final settlement, an imaginable institutional design that can end Palestinian-Israeli turmoil? Azmi Bishara's idiosyncratic perspective, which reflects both his secular orientation and leftist allegiances, offers a lens for pondering this question.

But before turning to the "Palestinian Question," consider the improbable success, relatively speaking, of Israel's experience with deep cultural differences within the Jewish majority, fortuitous product of a *sui generis* amalgam of settler nationalism, socialist humanism, and multicultural accommodation. The cleavages in Israel—between immigrants and natives, the secular and the religious, not to mention the classical binary between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim (which itself elides finer cultural distinctions)—would be enough to paralyze and divide any society under far less strenuous circumstances. Even so, despite successive destabilizing waves of migration, not to mention periodic (arguably permanent) political crises, there is a high degree of social solidarity among Israel's roughly 5 million Jewish citizens, as well as a non-trivial minority of its 1 million Arab citizens. In large part, this reflects the coalitional imperative in a democratic polity. Assimilationist programs have been met with disfavor in many communities, a disfavor then translated into votes, thus forcing existing political elites to welcome newcomers on more or less their own terms—a process which has involved many a charismatic politician, including some as demagogic as Azmi Bishara, leading his coethnics to the bargaining table. The tenacity of ethnic and other subnational identities has thus not precluded the creation of common bonds.

Despite notable exceptions—the celebrated Bedouins of the I.D.F. come to mind—the great exception to this broadening of loyalty has been the Arab minority. In light of a daunting demographic picture in which the Russian influx, in all likelihood the last major wave of Jewish immigration to Israel, has been exhausted, Jewish emigration from Israel is rising (of



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high human-capital individuals, no less), and high Arab birthrates, this failure represents nothing less than a disaster. And so Azmi Bishara's vision for the Israeli future may prove more salient than the various concessions proposed by Shimon Peres and others.

Unlike the Palestinian Authority leadership, Bishara opposes establishing a "right of return" for all those claiming descent from the 1948 wave of Palestinian refugees. Rather than hope for the literal obliteration of Israel, the nonnegotiable demand of most Palestinian militants, Bishara accepts Israel on the grounds that though "born illegitimately," the Zionist project has "created a nationality of Hebrew Jews. And therefore their right to self-determination has to be taken into account." At the same time, he believes Israel ought to become a "state for all its citizens," an implicit rejection of the Law of Return, *the* foundational premise of Jewish self-determination. In essence, Bishara is calling for a binational solution, not unlike that associated historically with Martin Buber and more recently with Edward Said.

Presented as a kind of civil rights agenda, a broadening of Israeli inclusion not unlike that which embraced the Sephardim, this has an obvious appeal, particularly for Americans. After all, the fantasy of the U.S. as a "creedal nation," a country united by liberal-democratic principles rather than, say, the hegemony of English along with widespread adherence to Christian or at least quasi-Christian norms, runs deep. If binationalism is fundamentally about rooting out "discriminatory Israeli land and housing policies," as Lama Abu-Odeh of Georgetown argues, who can possibly object? Isn't this directly analogous to U.S. civil rights struggles? This is where "the sweet taste of victory comes in." In the U.S. context, sweet victories included the passage of key legislation; for Bishara, champion of civil rights—a man described as Israel's Nelson Mandela—"the sweet taste of victory" involves guerrilla violence, and worse.

For Rousseau, the task of the political theorist is to reconcile "men as they are and institutions as they might be"; in designing common institutions, aspirations must be tempered by a recognition of human limitations, including human hatreds. Had the logic of linguistic nationality prevailed, the assimilated Jews of central Europe would have had no need for a Jewish State; similarly, had the common hope for a common peaceful future been enough to prevent the Palestinian leadership from sowing and exacerbating anti-Semitic hatred, there would be no need for an institutionalized defense of the Jewish majority, for a militarized Israel unwillingly policing violent P.A. fiefdoms. This is not to suggest that Israel has been unimpeachable—far from it. But it is hard to deny that Israel has made good faith efforts that have not been reciprocated by radical the Palestinian leadership on both sides of the Green Line. Arab students in Israel ought to learn Hebrew long before high school, as is the case now; similarly, Jewish students ought to learn Arabic at a young age. Persistent economic inequalities can be alleviated through serious interventions. Integration needn't mean marginalization, as Bishara has argued. All of these steps should be taken. For now, though, as long as the partisans of binationalism—like Bishara—are also the partisans of violence, Israelis and friends of the Israelis must resist its siren song.

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ronen mukamel

# From the Source: Arafat to His People

TALK OF YASSIR ARAFAT IS UBIQUITOUS these days. Particularly since the outbreak of the current intifada in September of 2000, the Western media has spilled many words about Arafat's control, or lack thereof, over the Palestinian side of the violence. Does Arafat in fact condemn terror? How much does he influence his own constituents? The best way to address these questions is to look beyond what is reported in the Western media and to examine what Arafat says in Arabic, to the Palestinian and broader Arab presses. HisArabic words about the intifada and terrorism reveal a great deal about his attitude towards the current conflict.

Many in the Arab world, Arafat included, have blamed the current intifada on Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon, the former and current prime ministers of Israel. Arafat blamed the two prime ministers in an interview with a Kuwaiti daily newspaper: "Barak could have stayed in power for another two and a half years, but the agreement between him and Sharon—following which Sharon went to visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which caused the well known massacre of the Friday prayers, as a result of which the intifada broke out—that agreement [and all of this] was preplanned."

This belief, promoted by the Arab press and Arab leaders, is remarkably widespread despite convincing evidence that the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) and Arafat himself were responsible for orchestrating the uprising. Arafat blames the outbreak of violence on Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount (or, as he would have it, the Al-Aqsa Mosque). Yet Sharon's visit came *after* the first violent acts of the intifada (an Israeli soldier was killed at the Netzarim junction the day before the visit). The day after Sharon's visit, the P.A. closed schools and provided transportation for students to protests at the mosque.

In fact, the P.A.'s Communication Minister 'Imad al-Faluji, explicitly admitted high-level involvement in the conflict in a speech to a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon: "Whoever thinks that the intifada broke out because of the despised Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque [Temple Mount], is wrong, even if this visit was the straw that broke the back of the Palestinian people. This intifada was planned in advance, ever since President Arafat's return from the Camp David negotiations, where he turned the table upside down on President Clinton." Arafat's uncorroborated claims of a conspiracy between Sharon and Barak, two bitter political rivals, served simply to cover up his own involvement in orchestrating the uprising.

Throughout the current period of conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Yassir Arafat has repeatedly called on his people to stop terrorist attacks on Israel. The militants under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority have never heeded Arafat's declarations. Arafat claims that Israel puts him in an impossible position and that he cannot stop the militants while Israel continues its so-called occupation. The Israelis argue that Arafat's calls are insincere and that the Palestinian leader has made no real effort to stop militants operating from within his territories.

Whose words should we believe? Consider Arafat's reaction to the bombing of a Tel-Aviv discothèque on June 1, 2001. In an interview with CNN immediately following the attack, Arafat condemned the violence: "I repeat our condemnation of this tragic operation and to all operations that result in the killing of civilians, Israelis or Palestinians. We will now exert our utmost efforts to stop the bloodshed of our people and the Israeli people and to do all that is needed to achieve an immediate and unconditional, real and effective ceasefire." Yet a documentary entitled "The



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Father of the Terrorists," which aired on German television on July 8, 2001, revealed that Arafat had sent a letter of praise to the family of the suicide bomber. In it, he called the attack "the heroic martyrdom operation" and extolled the bomber as "the model of manhood and sacrifice for the sake of Allah and the homeland."

Despite Arafat's declaration of an unconditional ceasefire in the statement above, the P.A. television station continued to incite Palestinians to violence. Less than a week after this first attack and Arafat's response of condemnation, the station aired a Friday sermon by Sheik Ibrahim Madhi, appointed by the P.A., in which he called for the destruction of Israel (as well as the U.S. and Britain) and blessed the suicide bombers: "Allah willing, this unjust state will be erased—Israel will be erased; this unjust state, the United States, will be erased; this unjust state, Britain, will be erased...blessings to whoever put a belt of explosives on his body or on his sons' and plunged into the midst of the Jews, crying... . Just as the building collapsed over the Jews in their sinful dancing floor [referring to the collapse of a wedding hall in Jerusalem]—I pray to Allah that this oppressive Knesset will collapse over the heads of the Jews."

Arafat's duplicity, condemning the violence in English while inciting it in Arabic, is a pattern that has repeated throughout the past year and a half. On August 8, 2001, after almost a year after the conflict erupted, the P.A. Press Agency released a statement calling for an end to the attacks on Israelis: "The mortal Palestinian attacks on [Israeli] citizens must stop." Just one day earlier, though, Sheik Madhi's Friday sermon (which also aired on the P.A. television station) took a very different tone: "Blessings for whoever assaulted a soldier. . . . Blessings for whoever has raised his sons on the education of Jihad and Martyrdom. Blessings for whoever has saved a bullet in order to stick it in a Jew's head." While Arafat repeatedly calls for a ceasefire and condemns suicide bombings in interviews with the Western press, he continues to force-feed anti-Israel rhetoric through the media. It is no surprise that the terrorism continues.

Consider also the Op-Ed piece that appeared in the *New York Times* in early Feburary, in which Arafat once again condemned terrorism. "Let me be very clear," he said, signaling a potential shift. "I condemn the attacks carried out by terrorist groups against Israeli civilians. These groups do not represent the Palestinian people or their legitimate aspirations for freedom. They are terrorist organizations, and I am determined to put an end to their activities." But before believing Arafat this time, keep in mind that four days later, Israel's Channel Two television station broadcasted a rally in which Arafat told onlookers, "We will make the lives of the infidels Hell" and called for "millions of martyrs [to] march to Jerusalem."

At this writing, it appears there is hope that Arafat will soon be irrelevant as a peace partner for Israel. His repeated refusal to cooperate with Israeli peace efforts and assertion that he would rather be a martyr than accept exile confirm beyond a doubt that he is determined to continue the violence. Lest this hope becomes cause for more deception, though, it is essential to remember that Arafat is not alone in leading the Palestinian people. It is now clearer than ever that many high-ranking Palestinian officials—even those previously considered "moderate"—have cooperated with Arafat's duplicity since the P.A.'s founding. They, too, have intentionally misled the Western press while inciting Palestians. Though the removal of Arafat from power may bring greater prospects for security in the region, it should not lead to hasty euphoria. Rather, until all of the top Palestinian leadership is willing to promote acceptance of Israel, it will continue to attempt to deceive the West, alluding to good intentions in English while breeding just the opposite in Arabic.

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All translations courtesy of the Middle East Media Research Institute.



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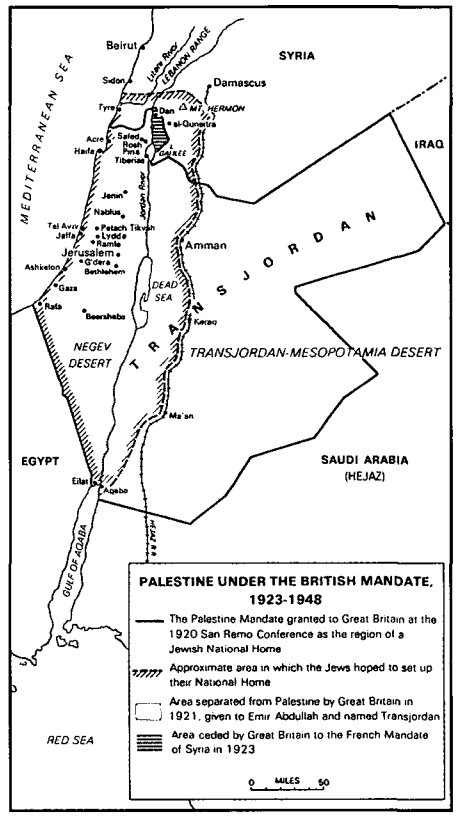
# HIR Background Notes:
# A History of the Israeli-Arab Conflict

## 1882-1914: Jewish Immigration to Palestine

The first wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, known as the First *Aliyah*, began in 1882 in response to a wave of violent anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia. Nearly 35,000 Jews arrived between 1882 and 1903, followed by another 40,000 during the Second *Aliyah* from 1903 to 1914. These Jewish settlers purchased largely uncultivated land from Arab owners. In 1880, the total population of Palestine, comprised mostly of Arabs, was roughly 532,000. The Jewish population was over 17,000. Jews were concentrated in four locations: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias, where Jews had lived since Biblical times.

## 1917-1947: The British Mandate

Upon the conclusion of World War I, the southern portion of the Ottoman Empire was divided between France and Britain. The land given to Britain, known as the British Mandate, included present-day Israel and Jordan.




## 1922: The Churchill White Paper

Due to escalating Arab nationalism and anti-Jewish sentiment in Palestine, Britain restricted Jewish settlement to the area west of the Jordan River, twenty-five percent of the total area under British control. The remaining seventy-five percent, the area east of the Jordan River, would become the Arab state today known as Jordan.

## 1937: The Peel Commission

From 1936 to 1939, prominent Arab leaders in Palestine orchestrated what is known as the Arab Revolt to protest Jewish settlement. At the height of this uprising, in 1937, Britain sent a commission of inquiry to Palestine to facilitate a settlement. The Peel Commission, as it was called, proposed partitioning the land into separate Jewish and Arab states. After significant internal discord, the plan was accepted by Zionists, but rejected by Arabs, marking the first of several lost opportunities for a second Arab state in the land of the British Mandate.

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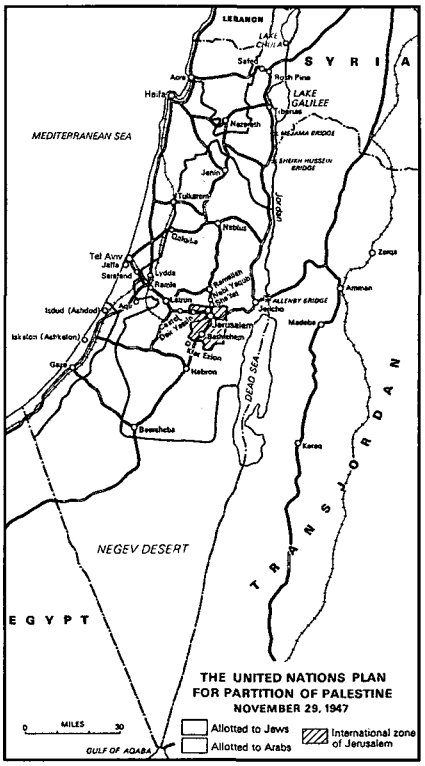
### 1945: The Arab League

Founded after the Second World War by Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan (now Jordan), Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, the Arab League was conceived as the official political expression of Pan-Arabism, a modern movement for national unification among Arabs in the Middle East.




### 1947: Partition

Exasperated by increasing hostilities in Palestine, the British government relinquished its Mandate and turned the issue of settlement over to the United Nations. On November 29, the U.N. General Assembly approved Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish States. The Jews accepted, but the Arabs declared they would resist partition by force.

### 1947-1948: Israel's War of Independence

Britain announced the termination of its Mandate to take effect on May 15, 1948. On May 14, Zionist leadership proclaimed the independent State of Israel. The next day, in response, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon attacked Israel in the hopes of destroying it. During that summer, with Israel steadily gaining control, U.N. delegate Count Folke Bernadotte proposed a two-state plan similar to that of Resolution 181, but both sides rejected it. Finally, after nearly eight months of fighting, Israel and her Arab neighbors signed armistice agreements. By the time the war had come to an end, over 500,000 Arabs had fled to surrounding Arab states. Yet Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon refused to accept them as citizens, creating a refugee problem that has remained a political issue to this day. At the same time, fleeing murderous pogroms and vicious persecution, some 470,000 Jews escaped to Israel from their ancestral homes in Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. These refugees became Israeli citizens.

### 1964-1969: The Palestine Liberation Organization

On May 28, 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) was formed by the Arab League to centralize smaller resistance groups operating in Israel and in refugee camps elsewhere. It served as an umbrella organization for terrorist groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.) and Egytian-born Yassir Arafat's Fatah movement, among others. In 1964, the P.L.O. passed the Palestinian National Charter, rejecting the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the U.N. Partition Plan of 1947 and calling for an "armed Palestinian revolution" to destroy the Zionist presence in Palestine. In 1967, operating from Jordan, Fatah launched the first in a series of guerrilla operations attacking Jewish towns in the West Bank. In 1969, Arafat was elected chairman of the P.L.O. and Fatah came to dominate the organization.



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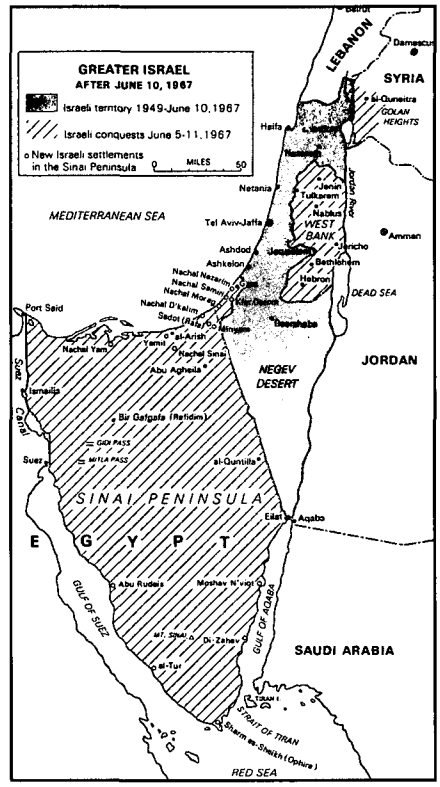
### 1967: The Six-Day War

On May 15, Egyptian President Nasser massed troops and tanks in the Sinai Desert and demanded that U.N. Emergency Forces leave the Sinai Peninsula. On May 23, he announced a renewed blockade of the Tiran Straits, an internationally-recognized act of war. On June 5, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian airfields. Jordan attacked West Jerusalem shortly thereafter, despite Israel's appeal to stay out of the war, prompting Israel to attack the airfields of Jordan, Iraq, and Syria. On June 10, all states accepted the U.N. Security Council's demands for a cease-fire. Israel maintained control of Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights. As a result, approximately one million Arabs came under Israeli sovereignty. On November 22, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling for Israel's withdrawal from the territories captured during the war in exchange for Arab security cooperation and recognition of its sovereignty. This document introduced the "land-for-peace" concept, asking Israel to concede land in exchange for Arab promises to end the violence against it.




### 1970: Black September

Arafat's P.L.O., still operating in Jordan, openly challenged Jordanian King Hussein's political authority. The P.F.L.P. hijacked four international airliners, leading to the eruption of a ten-day civil war. Thousands of innocent Palestinian refugees were killed during the fighting. In July of 1971, Hussein's troops launched a decisive attack on the guerilla bases and forced the P.L.O. out of Jordan. The Palestinian groups shifted their bases of operation to Lebanon and Syria.

### 1973: The Yom Kippur War

On October 6, the Day of Atonement and the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israeli positions in the Golan Heights and Sinai. Fighting continued until October 24, when Egypt and Israel agreed to a cease-fire.

### 1977-1979: Peace with Egypt

On November 20, 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made a historic visit to Jerusalem, addressing the Knesset and asking for peace with Israel in exchange for the return of the Sinai Peninsula. This led to a series of meetings that culminated in the signing of the Camp David Accords in September of 1978. Israel and Egypt signed a final peace treaty on March 26, 1979.

### 1982: Lebanon War

After its expulsion from Jordan in 1970, much of the P.L.O. settled in Lebanon, where it seized whole areas of the country and undermined governmental authority. In 1978, the P.L.O. launched repeated terrorist attacks against Israel. In 1982, after a Palestinian attempt to assassinate an Israeli ambassador, the Israeli Defense Forces under the leadership of Ariel Sharon entered Lebanon to drive the terrorists out. Israeli troops defeated the P.L.O.



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and Syrian forces, expelling the P.L.O. from all areas except Beirut. In August of 1982, following an international guarantee to protect the safety of Palestinian fighters leaving Beirut, the Phalanges, Israel's Christian Lebanese allies, massacred hundreds of Palestinian civilians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. The P.L.O. relocated to Tunisia, though many of the terrorist organizations that threatened Israel, including Hezbollah and P.F.L.P., continued to operate from bases in Lebanon. As Israel's 1985 pullout later revealed, its aim in invading Lebanon was not the acquisition of territory. While Israel continued to station troops in southern Lebanon until its final withdrawal in the summer of 2000, it did so for security reasons only.

### 1987-1991: The First Intifada

On December 8, 1987, an Israeli truck driver lost control of his vehicle, smashing into Gaza's Jabaliya refugee camp and killing four Palestinians. This marked the beginning of a long and violent Palestinian uprising that continued in waves for four years. At the same time, the P.L.O. launched the "intrafada," an effort to kill Palestinian "collaborators" that ultimately claimed nearly 1,000 lives.

### 1993: The Oslo Accords

After secret negotiations in Norway, Arafat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed a peace plan to be implemented in two phases over several years. The first phase of the Oslo Accords called for Israel's withdrawal from lands captured during the Six-Day War and for the transfer of administrative power to a newly elected Palestinian Authority. The Palestinians pledged in turn to combat terrorism and revoke statements in the Palestinian charter denying Israel's right to exist. The second phase of the peace process, postponed to a later date, was to include negotiations about control of Jerusalem and the status of the Palestinian refugees.

### 1994-1999: Implementation of Oslo

Agreements between Israel and the Palestinians in 1994 entailed the withdrawal of Israeli forces from most of Gaza and parts of the West Bank, and the transfer of power over healthcare, education, social welfare, taxation, and tourism in those areas to the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza on January 20, 1996, electing Arafat as Chairman of the Palestinian Council. Yet the peace process was disrupted in the early spring of 1996 with a string of Palestinian suicide bombings that killed dozens of innocents. Additional bombings in 1997 killed and wounded hundreds more. In keeping with the terms of Oslo, Israel expanded existing communities in the West Bank during this time but did not build new settlements.

### 2000: Barak and Arafat at Camp David

The first attempt at final status negotiations took place at Camp David from July 10 to 25. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak endorsed Palestinian administrative control over certain areas of Jerusalem, Israeli withdrawal from eighty-eight percent of the West Bank and all of Gaza (including the evacuation of existing Jewish settlements), and the reunification of 100,000 refugee families. Palestinians demanded complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in 1967, control over East Jerusalem and the Old City of Jerusalem, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel proper. No agreement was reached.

### 2000-present: The Second Intifada

On September 28, Israeli politician Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the original site of the two Jewish Temples and now home to the Muslim Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. This event coincided with the beginning of a second Palestinian uprising that continues to this day.



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ari ezra waldman

# Tomorrow's Hope

THOUGH HE SAID he never realized I was Jewish, a distant acquaintance from class freshman year was intrigued when he saw me walking to Shabbat services wearing a white *yarmulke* (skull cap). After a few pleasantries, he asked me point blank: "What is going on in Israel?" I said, after a moment of repose: "It's like September 11, just every day."

My inquisitor was shocked, needless to say. To me, though, it was a serious and even-handed assessment of how Israeli lives have been transformed since the beginning of Arafat's intifada. I thank God every day that my family was unharmed as a result of the World Trade Center collapse; now I add a special prayer that my family and friends in Israel will not become the next victims of Arafat's suicide bombers. From America, I explained to my friend, I can pray, raise money for desperately needed ambulances, urge my elected representatives to support Israel, and inform the uninformed masses about the truth of the suicide bombings and Arafat's bloody complicity. I cannot, however, fight on the front lines.

Israel recently called up twenty thousand reservists—out of the *yeshivot*, the colleges, the markets, the offices—to do what it has been forced to do since 1948: defend its right to exist through war. No one likes war, least of all the men and women who would rather be studying or otherwise living their lives but have, with determination and zeal, answered the call of their country and their people. They stand at post, risking their lives to preserve not just their own state, not just the idea of Jewish national identity, but also the very right of the Jewish people to exist. Meanwhile, I sit in the Ivory Tower afforded me by distance, an elite education, and the historical accident of my own national origin.

The brave men and women serving in the Israeli Defense Forces are paradigms of heroism. In true republican fashion, they constitute a citizen militia gathered to defend the state and their way of life from foreign armies or, as in this case, Arab terrorists. There is no draft dodging in Israel; few can with clean conscience pass on this responsibility to their neighbors. The cause in which Israel is presently engaged transcends the cause of nationalism and statehood. Israelis fight not only for the territorial integrity of their state, but also for the survival of the Jew as religious and cultural identity.

Jews in France are under attack by homegrown anti-Semites. Throughout liberal Europe, cries against supposed Israeli brutality point wagging fingers at Ariel Sharon and the Jews that support him. The Muslim world cannot come together and even explicitly, unqualifiedly recognize the right of Israel to exist. These eyes of hatred are glaring beyond the Jewish State—an entity they see as a temporary thorn—and staring deep into the heart of the Jewish people. Anti-Semities and Arab terrorists have come to this one profound and accurate conclusion: the way to destroy the Jews is to destroy their State.

We cannot exist without Israel, without the iron defense provided by those men and women called into service for their fellow Jews. They constitute a Jewish army, not just an Israeli army, fighting for their religious and cultural brethren and their right to live, work, prosper, and pray *in peace*. I lament that I cannot join in thier fight, and I am desolate when my fellow American Jews criticize or ridicule them. Beyond whatever monetary support I can contribute to the Zionist cause, my project is clear: I will not rest until all Jews realize that to be a Jew is to be a Zionist.



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